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[SHE LOOKED UP AND SAW THE MAN, WHO THOUGH HE MIGHT NEVER KNOW IT, WAS HER LOVE—HER HERO.]

NAMELESS.

CHAPTER XII.

A MOMENT'S silence, as the solemn midnight hour struck out its chimes; then she, who had been Lord Earl's darling, who was so fitted to be the joy and crown of a good man's life, raised her beautiful eyes to Sir Ronald's face.

"Let me go!"

"Not until you have answered me," he repeated, fiercely. "I tell you, you must take your choice; there is no middle course. To you I must be dearest of all, or most cruel foe. I ask you, Lilian, which is it to be—war or peace?"

The girl never hesitated. Full well she knew the danger she was risking, but her answer came clear and distinct in one word,—

"War!"

"So be it," he moved aside to let her pass. "A time will come, young lady, when you will regret your choice. I have loved you too well to yield you cheerfully to another. I will make your life so desolate that if tears of blood could wash out that fatal word of defiance you would gladly shed them."

She answered him nothing, this little foundling, who was a beggar and an outcast, who had no true name even of her own. She never trembled beneath his threats; she passed from his sight with head erect and flashing eyes; only when she had reached the shelter of her own room she broke into a passion of bitter sobs. It seemed to her that no creature on God's beautiful earth had ever been more desolate than she; that there was no rest, no repose, no security for her in all the wide, wide world.

She sobbed herself to sleep, and when she woke from her disturbed, fitful slumber, the bright summer sunshine was pouring into the room, and the little maid who usually waited upon the schoolroom party stood at her bedside with a letter.

Lilian was conscious of some terrible recollection; then the scene of last night came back to her in all its horror. She looked so white and ill that the servant expressed surprise.

"It is nothing," said Lilian, putting one hand to her burning brow; "only my head aches, and I am tired. I shall be downstairs in a very few moments."

Left alone, she opened the letter; its contents gave her a little relief. She had fancied it came from her cruel persecutor; in reality it was from Mr. Darby. The rector told her, in a few manly lines, that he by no means gave up his cherished hopes; he still trusted in time to overcome her reluctance to make him happy; serious illness in his own family called him unexpectedly from home. He could not leave the neighbourhood without assuring her he was still her devoted and attached friend. He begged her in any trouble, any difficulty, to write to him; he could have no greater pleasure than to think and act for her.

"He is a good man," thought Lilian, as she folded away the letter with a tear; "why couldn't I love him? Oh! love, how strange it is! I gave my heart away to a man who has no grain of affection for me, who simply helped me from mere compassion, and yet for all time I love him. I could not marry Mr. Darby while my heart is his friend's."

It never struck her during her hasty toilet

that Mr. Darby's absence almost played into Sir Ronald's hands; she never realized that she was more helpless, more thoroughly in his power, now the brave gentleman who loved her so fondly and would have protected her from sorrow at the risk of his own life was away.

Things went on much as usual that day. Lilian might almost have believed last night's alarm an idle dream, but for a certain look of triumph upon the face of Sir Ronald Trevlyn, and a terrified recollection of those cruel caresses which no dream could have left.

Almost a week passed on, and Lilian began to feel almost safe. Surely her persecutor must have relented, since he delayed so long he could not mean to fulfil his threats?

It was a lovely summer's afternoon; the sun was warm, but a cool refreshing breeze prevented its rays from being too oppressive. Lilian and the children had been for a long walk, and were returning through the park. Daisy and Pansy, in wild spirits, were careering about like butterflies; their governess stood leaning against a tree, thinking how happy she might have been in this lovely home but for the threats of Sir Ronald Trevlyn; but for a certain aching pain at her heart—a pain all women must learn to know, if they are unfortunate enough to give their love without hope of return.

She made a pretty picture as she stood there leaning against a tree. The extreme heat had driven her to cast aside her crape-trimmed cashmere, and she wore a simple white cambric dress, with sash and bows of black ribbon; her broad-brimmed hat suited the oval shape of her face, and her glorious golden hair glittered in the summer sunshine; her dark blue eyes were full of intense feeling. Taken all in all, it was a lovely face, one that, once seen, must imprint itself upon the memory for ever.

"Have you forgotten me?"

She looked up, and saw the man who had rescued her in her sorest need, who though he might never know it was her love—her hero. Guy Ainslie stood before her, a strange smile upon his thoughtful face.

"I believe you were lost in a day dream," he said, pleasantly. "Miss Green, will you not welcome me to the Castle?"

She put her little snowflake of a hand into his outstretched one. He thought how she was changed from the thin, dispirited looking creature he had first noticed at the City restaurant; and then he remembered the story which had reached him of the rector's wooing. Was it his friend's love which had brought the colour to those fair cheeks—the brightness to the dark eyes?

"Are you happy here?" he asked, abruptly.

"Yes;" answered Lilian, very frankly; "so happy I often ask myself if it will last!"

Guy decided the engagement must be an established fact, and felt a kind of distaste for his old friend, which he could not understand.

"Archibald Darby is an old comrade of mine!" he said, gravely. "I have, known him, man and boy, for over twenty years, Miss Green, and I think you need have no fears of your happiness not lasting. He is a very knight of olden days, strong and resolute, tender and true."

"Please don't!"

"I forgot I had only spoken to you twice before," he said, stiffly; "somehow I had thought of you almost as an old friend. I ought, perhaps, not to have offered my congratulations so unceremoniously!"

"It is not that!" and the girl blushed furiously; "you are the kindest friend I ever had, only—you are mistaken."

"Am I?" asked Guy, kindly. "Why Lady Dacres came to my sister with the news in great distress at the thought of losing you."

"She will never lose me like that!" returned Lilian; "Mr. Ainslie, how is your sister?"

"Very well indeed!"

"And she is still at Leckenham?"

"Yes; we are not fond of moving. You must go and stay with her in your holidays. I suppose you *do* have holidays sometimes?"

"I don't know. I never thought of asking!"

"Are they good to you?" looking searchingly into her face. "You know we sent you here, and we have a sort of claim to know if you are satisfied."

"I am quite satisfied!"

"And those are the children?" looking at the white-frocked damsels in front. "To think of those being Vivian's daughters!"

"Step-daughters," corrected Lilian.

"Ah, it means the same! I am only just realising it. I have known Lady Dacres ever since she was a little, toddling child. It is difficult to think of her as a married lady."

Knowing what she did, Lilian could not raise her eyes to his face, lest he should see the sorrow stamped on it.

At that moment the children ran up, and Guy made friends with them on the spot. In five minutes the two little girls were his devoted slaves.

In the dark, after-time which followed in the sad days, when he knew his own secret, the picture often came back to him. Lilian in her white dress; her beautiful face full of purity and innocence, the children clinging fondly to her hand; when cruel voices were busy with her name; when they tried to cast a shadow on her memory, he thought of this picture, and he knew that every word they said was false. That the girl he had rescued from misery and want might have been unfortunate and poor, but never, never weak and erring.

They reached the house, my Lady and Sir John meeting them on the threshold.

Vivian's dark eyes gleamed ominously when she saw who had been Guy's companion.

"Miss Green," she said, abruptly, "I cannot have the children tiresome to my guests. You should have brought them home another way when you saw they would disturb Mr. Ainslie."

Guy's face looked stern. He was a generous man, and he hated oppression. He knew his cousin Vivian pretty thoroughly. He knew she could be very cruel to anything completely at her mercy, and his heart ached for the slight, delicate girl who never resented these proof. He was glad when Sir John took up the cudgels.

"Hush, Vivian. Men like children! If my little maids bored Guy he could have got rid of them. You think, dear, because children try your nerves everyone is as sensitive as yourself."

Guy laughed.

"We had a charming walk," he said, quietly; "in fact, Vivian, I am under a debt of gratitude to your little daughters for escorting me. Without their guidance I might never have found the way."

"Go to the school-room, children," said my Lady. "Miss Green, what are you waiting for?"

Guy was pleased to see the baronet open the door for his children's governess as respectfully as though she had been a duchess. Then the conversation passed to indifferent topics, and presently Sir John went out and left the cousins alone.

He knew perfectly that they had once been plighted lovers, but he knew also that Guy Ainslie was too true and noble to have become his guest unless the old wild passion had died out.

"Well, Vivian," said Guy, trying hard to forget he had ever thought of her as his future wife, "I congratulate you. It would be hard to find a more lovely home than Castle Dacres."

"It's well enough."

"What, tired of your splendour already? That's not like you!"

"I am tired of everything, Guy! I am the most miserable woman in the whole world!"

She wore rich velvet robes; costly gems glittered on her fingers; everything about her told of wealth and luxury. Her husband idolised her. Guy contrasted her position with that of the lonely little governess, and yet Lilian had told him only half-an-hour before she was "quite happy."

"Nonsense," he said, almost roughly. "You are very happy, Vivian; and, indeed, you have everything to make you so."

"A husband years and years older than myself, and a couple of unruly step-children!"

"You knew Sir John's age before you married him, and the children seem nice little things, my dear girl," falling into the old, familiar address, "your troubles are of your own making."

"Yes," she said, wistfully, "I suppose they are. I ought never to have married Sir John; but I was ambitious, and to ambition I sacrificed my love."

"Hush," said her cousin, "remember, you are Sir John's wife, and I am his guest. I would never have consented to come here had I thought you could forget this."

"You have forgotten all that went before," she cried, hoarsely, "or is it that you can't forgive me? You treat me as a stranger, a mere acquaintance!"

"I treat you as a good man's honoured wife," he repeated, gravely.

"And you have forgotten——"

No! he could not say that quite yet; she had been gloriously beautiful, and for a brief time he had believed her his own. The hopes and dreams which he had centred on this woman, the love and honour he had poured out upon her, only he and Heaven knew.

"I have forgotten nothing," he said, "for a while you were the sunshine of our home, a little much-loved sister to Kate and myself. You are now Sir John's wife, and our paths in life run differently. The interlude between it behoves us both to forget."

She raised her dark eyes and looked straight into his face.

"You have put another in my place!"

"I do not understand you."

"Oh! it is easy for you to tell me to forget. You can forgive Sir John heartily for depriving you of me, since already you are consoled. You have found another love!"

"Really, Vivian, you are too romantic."

"You cannot deny it."

"Deny what?"

"That you are engaged to be married."

Guy laughed grimly.

"Vivian, I have had enough of that. You taught me the lesson of woman's faithlessness pretty effectually. I don't suppose I speak to a young lady once a month."

Vivian's cheek flushed.

"Do you know I always fancied you cared for Miss Green!"

"In that case you hardly showed generosity in introducing her to Darby."

"Guy, *do* you care?"

"Yes!" he said, coolly. "I think she is a delicate, timid girl, and I would never have let Kate send her to you had I guessed how you would treat her. I care for any defenceless girl too much to like to see her treated as an upper servant."

Lady Dacres' face had brightened.

"When I saw you together just now I fancied——"

"All kinds of stupid things, I daresay."

"That you were going to marry her."

"Darby's means are more than quadruple mine, so I should not be doing her a particular service. Besides, Vivian, as a fact, I have only seen her twice before in my whole life; so if the idea of her aspiring to be your cousin has troubled you, put it out of your head, and treat poor Miss Green more like flesh and blood."

Vivian looked at him with a strangely, tender smile.

"Shall you ever marry, Guy?"

"Not for a dozen years, I daresay."

He meant he was quite free at present from any thought of matrimony; but Vivian translated the phrase to imply that while Sir John Dacres lived he would keep single, since the only woman he would ever wish to wed could only be his wife at the baronet's demise.

My Lady went off to dress for dinner in the very best of temper and spirits, and Guy

walked slowly to his room, pondering a little sadly upon the change wealth and rank had wrought in her character.

"Of all women in the world Vivian should be gentle with a creature so fair and delicate as Miss Green! But for our giving her a home she might have to fill just such a position as Miss Green's; and she treats her rather worse than her own maid, and not half so well as the grand person in black silk whom she calls her housekeeper!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Guy Ainslie had been more than a week at the Castle. Less than half of his visit remained.

He stood alone one afternoon in his own room, thinking rather gravely of all that his stay in Monmouthshire had brought about.

He had come there to prove to himself that he was cured of his wounds, fancying that, if he once stayed in Vivian's house as her husband's guest, the old, mad infatuation must die out.

Well, even on first meeting her he had known his cure was complete. He could never be quite indifferent to Vivian Ormond. He could never forget that she had been his first love; but for all else he was cured.

The old love was dead in his heart, and another had risen up.

The lonely girl he had first met fighting her battle with the world, and almost crushed by it—the forlorn waif-and-stray who owned her present home, her very life almost to himself—was his second love.

He had struggled manfully against the infatuation, but it was too much for him. He who had been deceived by a woman once, and resolved never more to believe in one, had staked his only chance of happiness upon a pair of blue eyes.

He loved her. He hardly knew when the feeling sprang up. He could not have told when its germ first took root. He only knew that one morning at breakfast, when Lady Dacres looked up from a letter, and said, sweetly, "Mr. Darby will not be home for another month," he woke up to his own secret. He and Archibald had been like brothers, and now the only feeling he experienced at not seeing Mr. Darby was one of glad relief. In spite of Lilian's words, he believed the rector would never rest until he won her hand; and the news of his prolonged absence taught Guy it was just that little hand which alone in all the world could make him happy.

He said nothing. He was too full of his own discovery for words. But Sir Ronald Trevlyn, who sat next him, interposed, quickly,—

"What kind of a man is Mr. Darby?"

Many voices were raised in answer. They told how the rector was brave and just, generous and true; but they also said he was proud and stern; that he would suffer any pain, bear any sacrifice, rather than the shadow of disgrace.

"Ah!" said Sir Ronald, quietly, "I thought as much. And he is to marry Miss Green?"

"He makes no secret of his wishes," said Lady Dacres, smiling. "It will be a great thing for her."

Guy could not have explained the feeling, but he suddenly conceived an intense desire to knock Sir Ronald down. Of course he could not indulge this desire, but he was conscious of it all the same. He even felt a great relief when Sir John proposed a long ride to some distant object of interest that Sir Ronald excused himself at once.

"I am very sorry, really, but I must stay at home to-day—important letters to write."

His bride-elect seemed annoyed, but the party was soon made up. To Guy's surprise the children were included in it—they were to drive with Miss Cash in the waggonette.

"You will go too, Vivian?" asked her husband?

"No; my head is too bad, so you must excuse me; and Miss Cash will, I am sure, take my place as mistress of the occasion. I will order luncheon to be packed up, and I dare say you will have a delightful afternoon."

Guy met the children an hour later in all the flush of anticipation. He noticed that Lilian was not with them.

"She is not coming," said Pansy, simply; "I asked her if she would not be dull, but she says she has a bad headache, and mamma had said she could stay at home."

Guy felt pleased at this mark of woman's consideration; but as he passed the schoolroom door he was tempted to open it. He knew his secret now—this fair-haired girl was all the world to him, and he longed to see the face which had grown so sweet to him.

Great Heaven! was that Lilian? She sat perfectly erect upon a high-backed chair, her feet planted on the rungs of another, one hand supported her aching head, the other fell listlessly upon her lap. There were purple rings round her dark eyes, and her cheeks were pale as marble. Guy forgot all prudence—all forethought, then he went up to her, and took her hand.

"What is the matter?"

She made no answer—one would really have said she did not hear him. She never raised her head. He could see that her eyes were dry and tearless. Guy Ainslie stood aghast; he had seen something of sorrow in his life, but never a despair like unto this.

"What is it?" he asked again. "Won't you tell me what is troubling you?"

No answer; but the violet eyes were turned towards him, and there flashed on him one look of undying gratitude!

"Trust me," he said, persuasively.

"I do," whispered the girl, "more than anyone in the world."

"Then let me help you."

"No one can do that."

Guy looked at her tenderly, the love at his heart making it ache for the change sorrow and distress had wrought in hers; and then again there came to him the remembrance of his friend. Could it be possible that this sad, lonely creature was sorrowing over Darby's absence?

"If you trusted me you would confide in me," he said, gently.

"I cannot. Oh, Mr. Ainslie! why will you press me to tell you my miserable secret? Can't you see that the very thought of speaking of it crushes me to the earth?"

A fearful suspicion crossed Guy's mind—he knew nothing, absolutely nothing of her past. Could it be that those silent years hid the secret of a sin that, young and beautiful as she was, there lurked a dark stain upon her young life?

She put one hand in his; to his surprise she turned to him with a piteous, beseeching voice,—

"Mr. Ainslie, is it very wrong to hide what would set the whole world against me? Is it wicked not to tell Lady Dacres what would make her turn me instantly from her house?"

Guy's heart stood still. Was it as he had feared?

"You are so young," he said, gently. "You may have been deceived; you may have been sinned against, not sinning."

"Oh, no!" she answered, simply. "I was not deceived, I knew the truth. I knew that it would shut me out from all friendship, all happiness, and so I kept it secret, and I let your sister send me here. I thought I could undertake to teach Daisy and Pansy. I fancied the secret of my life could have no power to hurt them."

Guy Ainslie shook off the little hand as though it had been the touch of a scorpion. He had loved, alas! he loved still, this girl as his own soul. He could not forgive her the misery she was causing him; the deeper his wound the harder he steeled himself against her.

"You have deceived us all," he said, sternly. "You let my sister send you here under false pretences; you won the honest love of a good man; you moved among us daily an acting lie; and now that some fear of detection has arisen you feel some sensations of remorse. Oh, Heaven! Why do such false creatures have faces pure and true as yours? Why are you allowed to resemble angels in outward seeming?"

"I thought you would be merciful," said the girl, faintly. "I never thought you would judge me harshly."

"I am not a hero," he said, coldly. "I make no profession of being different to my fellows. You have deceived me; I would have staked my life upon your truth and innocence. You confess to me that you are a living lie—that if my cousin knew you as you are she would send you from her house! You tell me this, and you are surprised I judge you harshly."

"Yes—" wearily, oh! so wearily. "You were so brave and strong, I though you would have pity on me. There was no one in the world to help me, and I was so desolate your sister offered to send me here. Do you know that when I saw her I was almost penniless—my choice lay between Castle Dacres and—the river?"

Guy shuddered.

"And now what has changed your views? If you thought it right to come here last winter under false pretences why do you grieve now. In your case falsehood has certainly prospered You have a happy, easeful home, the love of two innocent children. What has caused your grief?"

"My views have not changed," said Lilian, slowly; "they are just the same. I always thought it wrong to come here, but I could never have sent myself away; it would be like Eve's leaving Paradise of her own accord; only I have learned to-day that detection is at hand. In a very little while my secret will be mine no longer, and Lady Dacres will send me from the Castle."

He saw an envelope lying on her lap, but he did not know that it was the handwriting of Sir Ronald Trevlyn.

"Where shall you go?"

"I do not know, the world is very wide. Mr. Ainslie, perhaps we shall never meet again. I wish you would forgive me before you go. I did not deserve your help; I ought never to have taken your sister's aid without telling her my sin; but oh! I was so miserable, so forlorn."

She stopped, choked by a little sob. Guy longed to take her in his arms, and tell her that was her refuge from all sorrow; but he was a proud man. He would not marry a woman with such a past as he believed Lilian's; he felt as miserable almost as she did; she little knew the hopes she had shattered this morning.

"I wish my sister was here!"

"I wish she were. I think I should find her a kinder judge than Lady Dacres."

"Perhaps you may be alarming yourself needlessly, your fears may not be realized; your correspondent may not speak to Lady Dacres, after all."

Lilian rose.

"And do you think I could stay here after what you have said respecting me to-day. I knew I was wrong, but I never guessed how wrong, if I am spared, the misery of your cousin's hearing my wretched story. I shall make some excuse, and leave her soon. It will not be so bad as being turned out. I shall go back to London, and live my life as best I can."

There was a noble spirit shining in her eyes. Guy hesitated. Could he be mistaken, after all?

"And you will write to us?"

She shook her head.

"No!"

"But my sister——"

"I could not bear it; she was kind to me, she believed in me before. Do you think I could go to her and read my sentence in her eyes as I have in yours? Why, death itself would be better."

"And Darby?"

"What of him!"

"Has it never struck you there is a way out of your difficulties?"

"How!"

"He loves you; he is his own master, and he is just the kind of man to overlook anything in your past."

Her eyes flashed with indignation.

"How can you think so basely of me, Mr. Ainslie? You believe that I could go to your friend without one spark of love for him in my heart, and accept from him name, fortune, and affection just because I needed a husband's care? I would rather beg my bread in the streets than stoop to such a course."

Voices were heard calling Guy.

It was time to set out, everyone was waiting for him.

He turned to Lilian,—

"At least promise me you will take no steps until my return. For to-day at least you are safe from any disclosures to Lady Dacres, since the post is gone. Promise me you will let things be until I return."

"To what end?"

"I think I have some claim on you," cried Guy, angrily, "or perhaps my sister has. In her name I entreat you to take no step until my return."

"I can never forget how kind you *once* were," said Lilian, "and by that kindness I will obey you. Unless Lady Dacres sends for me I will make no attempt to see her."

Guy rode off relieved.

Vivian, shut up with a headache, was not very likely to send for the governess.

He had at least gained a few hours for thought. If worst came to worst he would telegraph to his sister.

"She and I must never meet after she leaves here," he muttered, thinking of Lilian. "She is so fair and sweet I might forget all she has told me, and yet ask her to be my wife; but Kate has a large heart, and she does not know my secret, and she will judge my poor child mercifully."

It seemed to Guy Ainslie that each minute of that autumn morning was of more than usual length.

He talked and laughed with his companions; he answered when he was spoken to, but he did everything like a man in a dream.

He was only conscious of two things—that he loved Lilian as his own life, and she with her own lips had confessed her unworthiness.

The afternoon was well advanced when the party returned to the Castle.

Five o'clock tea was ready in the drawing-room, Lady Dacres dispensing it with her own fair hands; but Guy, whose eyes were sharpened by anxiety, noticed that she was unusually excited—her face was flushed, and a cruel smile played about her lips.

The two children in their innocence put the question Mr. Ainslie was longing to ask.

"Where is Miss Green, mamma?"

My Lady did not condescend to answer, and her husband took up the subject.

"Ah, where is the young lady, Vivian? the little ones said she had a headache."

"I am quite ignorant of her ailments," said Vivian, coldly, and speaking in a very low voice so as only to be heard by Sir John and her cousin. "Miss Green has left the Castle, and had I only known her antecedents she should never have entered it."

A painful pause followed.

The guests scattered round the room were dimly conscious something was wrong.

Guy's face was stern and impenetrable.

Sir John looked amazed.

No one had broken the silence when the butler entered, bearing on a silver salver one of those orange-coloured envelopes which have brought pain to so many households.

He stopped before Guy's chair.

"A telegram for you, sir."

(To be continued.)

A coat-tail flirtation is the latest. A wrinkled coat-tail bearing dusty toe marks means, "I have spoken to your father."

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Oh, Mr. Mallon, I am so sorry!" and Nella, with crimson cheeks, scrambled to her feet and stood up before him, as if she had suddenly come through the floor.

"*You* here!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "I could have sworn there was no one in the room!"

"I—I was lying here, warming myself, I suppose; and you came in so suddenly that I had not time to get away. I did stop my ears, but I couldn't help hearing a little."

"And that little you won't tell?"

"Certainly, I won't. I never told anyone, except Cyril, that I had found your whisker; but I am dying of curiosity," looking up at him with a smile, though her lashes were still wet with tears.

"You shall know all some day; and I don't think you will be sorry for helping me, even though you seem such friends with Mr. Somerville," he added, remembering his promise to Vere, and fancying he saw an opening.

"Friends!" she repeated, in surprise. "Have you forgotten that I told you I hated him?"

"No," with a slight smile, as he leant against the window-frame, in an attitude that might have been graceful if his figure had not been spoilt by that slight hump between his shoulders; "but, like most people, when the luck is against them, I am apt to judge by actions rather than words."

"What do you mean?" throwing her head back proudly.

"Simply this—I will be very frank with you. If you disliked Somerville as much as you fancied you did, you would not have gone to meet him at Nun's Tower!"

"I never did!" her eyes flashing resentfully.

"Never?" looking at her fixedly. "We found a bit of red ribbon off your dress in a summer-house," he added, slowly.

"He must have put it there. Won't you believe me?"

"I will believe anything you tell me," he said, gravely. "I could fancy he might put it there to anger Vere, if he guessed we were likely to come; but, as to yesterday, can you tell me that you only met him just outside the gates?"

She hung her head, whilst a wave of colour mounted to her forehead.

"I had an idea that you were at Nun's Tower with him, having gone there simply for the purpose of getting news of him; that he tried to keep you there against your will; that there was a slight struggle—probably just as you were starting homewards—during which your neck was scratched accidentally by something he was holding in his hand, and your reins were broken; that somehow you managed to get free, and he caught you up on the road. Tell me if I am right or wrong!"

She twisted her fingers in and out of each other, hesitating palpably as to how much she should admit. "Don't ask me," she said, at last, "till after Tuesday."

"Why Tuesday?" his suspicions roused in a moment.

"I mean—till—till—you are just going away."

"I have no right to ask you anything," completely puzzled by her conduct; "only, as Vere's greatest friend, perhaps you will forgive me if I take a liberty."

He waited for an answer, so she bent her head in assent.

"Last night you allowed Somerville to plead the excuse of a headache, in order that he might escape dinner and have a prolonged *tête-à-tête*."

"Excuse me," she interrupted, hastily, "I allowed nothing. I was lying there, at the mercy of anyone who chose to come and worry me."

"But instead of sending him away, you talked to him contentedly."

"How do you know anything about it?" turning upon him, passionately.

"Vere opened the door, with a glass of wine in his hand, which he thought might do you good; but he came away directly, not wishing to interfere."

She grew so pale that, in spite of everything, he pitied her.

"He saw me?" she said, in a low voice.

"Yes, he saw you; and when he came to bed, he wrote to accept Captain Mackinnon's offer of an exchange."

She leant against the back of a chair as if half stunned. This was why she had read such scorn in his eyes the only time that their glances met at breakfast—this was why he had resolved to go to India!

"Miss Maynard, I have no right to interfere, as I said before," and Mr. Mallon, bent on fulfilling his mission, came forward to the table. "I cannot understand the secret understanding between you, or by what pledge he has bound you; but this I *must* say, that Godfrey Somerville is a man to whom no woman would do well to trust either her happiness or her honour."

A little shiver ran through her from head to foot as she thought of those few terrible minutes when she was in his power.

Mr. Mallon saw the shudder, and feared that his warning had come too late.

"What has he done to you?" she said, coldly.

"I am his enemy. I tell you that frankly."

"Tell it to him the next time you meet. It would be more honourable than pretending to be a stranger, and blackening his character behind his back."

A gleam of passion flashed from his eyes; he began to speak, but checked himself. A minute elapsed, and then he said, quietly,—

"In a few days I hope to tell him so to his face. It is only necessity which keeps me silent now; but you know nothing, so, of course, you misjudge me."

"As you misjudge *me*. I am trying hard to do what is right by all!" looking up piteously into his face; "but you and Cyril make it as difficult for me as you can."

"Poor child!" his tender heart moved to compunction at once. "I only meant to help you."

"To help me, by suspecting me of all sorts of wickedness! It was bad enough for Captain Vere to think it, but worse still for him to mention it to anyone else."

"He was half mad, and obliged to open his heart to someone."

"And what am I to do? Am I not alone? It's worse for a woman than a man."

"He wanted you to treat him as I believe you used to do; but you chose Somerville instead."

"Or rather, seeing me utterly neglected, he thrust himself upon me. Perhaps it will relieve your mind to know that I never in all my life hated a man so much as I did Godfrey Somerville, only yesterday afternoon, when you were kind enough to think I was flirting with him. As you are anxious to join your mysterious friend in the stable-yard, I won't keep you any longer." With a slight bend of her head she walked to the door.

"One moment!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "Did you see anyone else at Nun's Tower?"

"What is that to you?" casting a wondering glance over her shoulder.

"Everything. More than life or death!"

As she looked up into his agitated face, the truth suddenly flashed through her brain. "You are Victor Maltravers!"

His head drooped. "For Heaven's sake, don't betray me?"

"What do you take me for?" she said, in gentle reproof, as her eyes filled with tears. "Not knowing you, but out of pity for your misfortunes, I have already done my best to help you."

"*You* have?" in grave surprise.

"Yes, *I* have," her cheeks flushing. "Wait

till after Tuesday, and you will misjudge me no longer."

"By that time it will be too late."

"I know better than you."

"Has he told you?" scanning her face eagerly, as if he thought he could draw the secret from her by the magnetic power of his eyes.

"If he had I shouldn't betray him."

"But I am only fighting for the right!"

"You shall be cleared. Have a little patience and all will come right."

"Patience!" he exclaimed, scornfully. "After three years of living death I have outgrown it."

"But the end is close at hand. I can't say more." Then she opened the door and stepped out into the hall, anxious to get away before she let out more than she intended; and Mr. Mallon looked after her, his mind distracted with fear and hope.

CHAPTER XLII.

EARLY that morning, before anyone was astir, Godfrey Somerville got on his horse and rode at a rapid pace along the lonely roads which led to Nun's Tower.

His face was white as the snowflakes which beat against it, and the circles round his eyes were as dark as the shadows under the gloomy ilexes.

Yesterday, for a few short minutes delirious joy was in his grasp; when that was lost he consoled himself, because he knew that at any moment he could put an end to his life as soon as it became intolerable; now, he was bound by a promise to live on, no matter how insupportable the days might be.

Hurrying on through the darkness desperate thoughts flitted through his mind. When the secret of Robin's existence was told to the world there would be no place in England where he could hide his head.

General execration would follow the man who had done his best to hang his friend, principally out of a fierce desire for vengeance, but partly out of a selfish wish to keep the taint of family madness a secret lest it should spoil his own prospects.

His actions had been produced by a web of conflicting motives, some of which were not wholly bad; but society at large would judge by facts and not by reasons, and pronounce his condemnation with the Pharisaical calmness of those who have never fallen, because temptation has not come in their way.

Sir Edward, that honourable, fearless gentleman, would never again shake him by the hand, or accept the shadow of an excuse for the smallest deviation from the straight path of honour.

Meta, poor little thing, would stick to him as long as she could, but she was too dutiful not to yield in time to parental persuasion.

Nella would marry Vera. "No, by Heaven, that she shan't!" he called out to the snow-tipped hedges. His voice startled a robin from his sleep, and he perched on a bough to look after the solitary passer-by.

Jealousy was rampant in the poor fellow's troubled breast. He could give up his hopes of the Somerville inheritance, he could vacate his place of honour amongst his fellow-men, he could let his name become a byword in civilized society, but he could *not* make up his mind to resign the girl he loved.

His love for Nella was like the first green leaf found in the heart of a desert of sand. He *must* keep it, *must* treasure it, in order to have the courage to live on.

She had behaved nobly in refusing to betray him, when he was completely in her power; and, in the first flush of gratitude, he had meant to do his duty, and make a clean breast of it before he died. Now different thoughts came into his brain.

If it were not for her he would have been dead by this time, and beyond the power of harming her. It was her fault, therefore, that he was alive, and she must take the consequences of her pious folly.

Thanks to her he might yet outwit them all. Robin might disappear from Nun's Tower and leave no trace behind her. Nella was the only person who had seen her; and he could easily prove that she had taken some other girl—a lady-love if need be—for his sister.

Yes, he could see his way to that; but still Nella would be lost to him—and that he could not endure.

If Turtle had not known the way as well as his master, they might never have reached the Tower, for he was far too deep in thought to guide him; but he had gone down the road so often at every hour of the day or night that he could have found the right direction by his own instinct.

It might be done after that ball at the Arkwrights, if she could be isolated from the rest and persuaded on some excuse or other to get into a carriage alone with him. It *might* be managed. With a clear start and a special license in his pocket, she could be forced to marry him before anyone could get on their track.

Yes, it might be done, only earth would never have known such a dishonourable scoundrel before.

He drew his brows together with horror at his own vileness. Every sin of the Decalogue came easier to him than breaking faith with the girl who had trusted him.

A mile further on he found a salve for his conscience. He would keep his word, and clear Maltravers, even when Robin was safe out of reach. She should not be exposed to the vulgar curiosity of the crowd. No doctors should come armed with certificates to test the power of her failing brain, as if it were a machine which had got somehow out of gear. He would make her happy in some quiet corner, with Prendergast for her attendant, within reach of the small nest where he meant to shelter his love; and a letter should be written to his uncle, duly signed and attested by proper witnesses, establishing the fact of her existence, though still hidden from all eyes. Then Nella would be his! The blood bounded in his veins, though the snow-flakes were falling round him and the east wind whistling in his ears. His own to love and cherish through all the years to come, with no cousin—lover or brother, which ever it suited him to call himself—to come between. To feel her little hand resting in his, and know that no one had the power to take it from his clasp! The dull, dark morning seemed to blush into dawn at the thought, as he drew up just outside a spinney, about a quarter of a mile from the Tower; and leading his horse just within the bushes, and out of sight of the road, tied him up securely to a young thorn. Then he made his way on foot across wet fields, till he came to a gap he knew of in the yew hedge. There was no one in sight; but he had an uneasy feeling that he might be watched, so waited for a few minutes under the shelter of a clump of ivy on a broken stem.

After looking carefully in every direction, and being satisfied that there was no one about, he stepped quickly across the ditch and slipped like an eel through the gap.

Directly he gained the inner side of the enclosure he became conscious of a gaunt figure, which was slowly making its way towards him. Holding his breath he watched it coming nearer, in the uncertain light not knowing whether it was friend or foe.

"Seven o'clock, and he promised to be here!" The words were only muttered in a hoarse whisper, but he recognized the voice at once as that of Prendergast's, and stepping forward, he laid his hand upon her arm.

"Shall we go into the house?" he said, in a low voice.

"Better stay here. I think the doors are watched," and she drew back under the shelter of the hedge. Her nerves were made of iron, and she had not given the slightest start at the touch of his fingers.

"Could you be ready to-morrow night?"

"To-night, if you liked it better."

"No, to-morrow; there will be plenty of carriages along the road, and one more or less won't be noticed. Drive straight to Copplestone, and take the train to Folkestone."

He paused as if in deep thought.

"Won't you be there yourself?" looking at the dim outline of his face in calm surprise.

"N—no. I think I shall have to go to Dover. It would be safer for us not to be together at first."

"She won't like going along o' me, unless you come with us."

"Nonsense! you know how to manage her. Tell her that *he* is waiting for her, and she will go as quietly as a lamb. She seems none the worse for being out in the cold?"

"Only a bit of a cough, which will be all right when I've put a poultice on her chest. But drat them keys, I can't think what's become of 'em! Mischief will come of having all the doors unlocked, as sure as my name's Prendergast. But I can't send for a smith to make a set of new ones, as we want no strangers about the place."

"Not for the world! Surely a table or chest of drawers will do for a barricade?"

"Yes, but there's no slipping them back in a hurry like you can turn a key in a lock. However, I deserve it all for my carelessness!"

"You don't think anyone could have got in and carried them off?"

"Well, the doors as I always keep locked were all undone," looking down thoughtfully on the ground. "But I think if they had done that they would have gone, further and stolen some of the silver which was lying on the table."

"But the doors couldn't have opened themselves!" impatiently.

"No, but I may have lost my head and left 'em open, when I found she had given me the slip. You may just say to me what you like. I deserve a horse-whipping and I would almost let you give it me," and she hung her huge head in unexpected humility.

"Don't let it happen again, that's all that matters now. Do you think you could get on better in France?"

"Lor'! Master Godfrey, what's the use? It would cost a sight of money to get us there, and she won't last long."

"But she's not ill?" hastily; "you said so just now."

"Not ill, but pining, and that's a sickness that no doctor can cure. Her cheeks are whiter than any eggshell, when she's not in one of her tantrums, and as for her hands, you can almost see through 'em."

A sigh. "Poor child!" he muttered, his heart full of pity; "we must fatten her up when we get her away from this dingy hole. I shall look out for the nicest lodging I can find!"

"And be sure there's a nice churchyard, with six feet of ground to spare in the prettiest corner."

"Confound you! you old croaker. I shan't care if there isn't a church or a parson in the place. You must be a widow lady travelling with her invalid daughter. Have you got all the toggery complete?"

"Yes, it's been ready these two months past."

"And have you got enough of the needful?"

"Plenty. I've always had it on my mind that we must be ready to start off at any moment."

"You are a wonderful woman!" he exclaimed, in involuntary admiration. "Write to me under the old name, Poste Restante, Paris."

"Then you are off to them foreign parts yourself?" examining his face as well as she could in the darkness. "Maybe you are not going alone?"

"That is no concern of yours." He leant against a post for some time in deep thought. "Dick will be left here in charge. I will put the place in the hands of a London agent, and tell him to dispose of it as soon as he can. It's

a beastly hole, and always gives me the horrors."

"A first-rate house for hiding, till those gents came peering about out of idle curiosity," she said, sententiously. "I've a fancy they are at it again."

"Deuce take them!" with a scowl. "I must be off. If you don't hear from me again, you know what to do. Three o'clock sharp."

He was just on the point of slipping once more through the hedge, when he stopped to ask if Robin had plenty of warm wraps.

Prendergast said she had the furs which he had given her last Christmas, which "were as good as ever they was."

Thinking of his sister's comfort, he remembered his own *discomfort*, and, with an angry shiver, made the best of his way across the damp grass to the spot where he had left Turtle.

Perfectly unaware of the fact that Joe Stevens had listened to almost every word he said from under the shelter of some huge dock-leaves in the ditch, he rode home in better spirits, satisfied with the probable results of his plans, and buoyed up with the hope of making Nella his wife.

The cold, grey morning broke, the snow-clouds rolled away, and one watery gleam of sunshine shot across the stable-yard as he gave his horse into the charge of a groom. With the superstition natural to one of his nervous temperament he took it for a good omen.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A few hours later Meta was sitting in the billiard-room on a stool by the side of the fire, whilst Godfrey Somerville, who was lounging in an arm-chair close behind her, sent volumes of smoke out of a cherry-wood pipe, over the top of her small, smooth head, with its neat little knob of sandy hair.

She had no idea that he had been out for a matutinal ride, and wondered at the want of energy in his attitude and appearance, whilst he was thinking of her simple heart as a toy with which he had played long enough, and which he would soon be bound to throw away.

As usual, they were as far apart in mind as the two poles, and the girl's love was unable to bridge over the chasm, unless it was met by the man's.

Happily unconscious of this incapacity, Meta was serenely happy, because she had got him all to herself, for the first time for many days; and it was quite enough for her to be allowed to sit at his feet, and contemplate his handsome, haggard face at her leisure; no doubts crossed her mind.

It did not occur to her as possible that after she had promised to be his wife anything could part them. She was sure of her own constancy under any trial, and if he had not loved her sufficiently to wish for her more than any other woman, why should he ever have asked her to be his wife?

Men were fallible, that she must allow, but Godfrey was one of the most disinterested creatures under the sun, so could never have been tempted by sordid considerations of pounds, shillings, and pence.

Therefore nothing disturbed the serene ocean of her content, except, perhaps, a ripple of mortification, every now and then, when he seemed to be paying too much attention to Nella Maynard.

But as Nella always assured her that she disliked him there could be no danger from that quarter.

"Godfrey, you look so ill that I am afraid you really hurt yourself very much in that fall yesterday," she said, after a long pause.

"A pity I didn't hurt myself more, and break my neck," as he stopped to examine his pipe and discover why it did not draw better.

"Yes, if you wished to break my heart!" the colour coming slowly into her cheeks.

"Hearts don't break now-a-days, my dear girl," he said, composedly. "They are made of such tough material that they are warranted to wear in all weathers. It would have been the luckiest day in your life, and not half bad for me."

"I don't understand you," the corners of her mouth drooping.

"No, and you never will. We are about as much alike as fire and water, and one is bound to destroy the other, if they attempt to—to come together!"

"Do you mean to say that if I marry you," speaking very slowly, "I shall destroy you?"

"One way, of course you would be my salvation, but the other, my d——, just the reverse."

"Why—why did you not say so before?" her thin lips pinched and quivering.

"Because I am the most selfish beggar under the sun, and only thought of myself. Could you be happy, little one, with a man whose ways and habits you knew nothing of—whose thoughts and hopes were as far out of your reach as the top of St Paul's?"

"I could," softly, like a breath.

"You would feel as if you were living in a hut at the mouth of a crater, guaranteed to explode some time or other."

"Still there might be some happy days first."

"And you are ready to chance it? By Jove! you are the bravest girl I know. Will *nothing* frighten you?"

"Nothing, so long as you remain the same. But, Godfrey," turning round so as to expose her earnest face to his view; "perhaps you want to get rid of me."

"Fancy a man wanting to get rid of one of the richest heiresses in Blankshire! My dear child, a pity there are no paupers to hear you; they might learn a lesson in humility."

Something in his tone jarred upon her sensitiveness, and the flush deepened on her cheeks, as she said, quietly, "You have not answered my question."

"Because it wasn't worth an answer. To put it with brutal plainness—I am head over ears in debt, and some of your tin would be a very convenient help. Are you satisfied?"

"No, it sounds exactly as if you were marrying me for my money."

"What does it matter, if you know that I am not? Lose Somerville to-morrow, and you will still be the good little cousin," fondling her chin, "who took pity on me and patted me, when nobody cared a jot whether I lived or died."

"But a cousin is different to a wife."

"Of course she is as inferior as milk is to cream. Half-a-dozen men might have you for a cousin, but only one can have you for a wife—and that is myself. I believe, bad as I am, you like me better than anyone else."

"I do," she murmured, as she hid her blushes on his knees.

He put his hand on her head, and smoked on in silence, abusing himself for the want of resolution he displayed in his attempts to break off with this second love, before he was on with the third.

Only the day after to-morrow, and he meant to do his best towards making another woman his wife, and yet it went against him to tear down this bit of ivy, which clung so tightly to a rotten wall.

He pulled his watch out of his pocket and exclaimed that he must lose no time if he meant to catch the 1.25 train.

She raised her head in surprise. "Are you going up to town?"

"Yes! Can't help it—business."

"But you look tired out already. What are you going for?"

"Something that no one can get for me," thinking of the special licence.

"Put it off till to-morrow."

"Not I. To-day I know to be mine, but I can't say as much for to-morrow."

"You talk so melodramatically, just as if you were a conspirator," putting up her hand to brush away a speck of dust from his coat.

"I told you you couldn't understand me," with an impatient frown.

"Never mind, I always like things and people that you can't make out at once."

"But it would be awkward if you never did."

"I shall some day," with quaint conviction.

"And when that day comes, you will say 'Thank Heaven, he never was my husband.'"

"Godfrey, what do you mean?" shrinking back in a fright.

"I mean that you are out and out too good for me. Look here, Meta," laying his hands on her shoulders. "I mean it honestly. It would be doing you the best service I could if I cut and run."

"Then don't, for I should have to put my dignity into my pocket, and run after you. I can't think what has come over you—you never teased me so much before!" looking up at him, with a puzzled expression on her face.

"No? There never was so much need. Child you are as simple and innocent as a newly-fledged chicken, and your imagination could never follow to the depths where I have gone."

"But I would pray Heaven to give you grace to be better. Oh, Godfrey," her small frame shaking with emotion, "however bad you are, or have been, I like you better than anyone else. Whatever you did, you would be quite safe with me; I would never turn against you—you must know that."

"If I didn't know it I could take it easily. I have never done you anything but harm. What in the world possesses you to like me so much?"

"You were here with us, through all our trouble; and years ago, when we were children, you used to be very kind to me, and carry me over all the ditches which were too wide for me to jump. It grew with my growth, till I couldn't help it, any more than my freckles. Are you *sorry*?" suddenly aware of the unlover-like expression on his face.

"Yes. Don't look like that," as her eyes filled with tears. "I am only sorry because you have put your cargo in a vessel that is bound to sink."

"You should have thought of that before," with quiet dignity.

"I know; I've been a brute and a scoundrel, but remember I was always fond of you—and the temptation was too great."

Then he stooped and kissed her, letting his lips linger on her soft cheek, because he thought it was for the last time. And she, dizzy with doubt, and quivering with excitement, surrendered herself to his caress, not knowing if the love of her lover had dwindled down into the steady-going affection of a cousin, or whether she was as much to him as she had dreamt she was before.

The door opened, and a slight figure appeared on the threshold. Somerville withdrew his arm from his cousin's waist hurriedly, as if he had been caught in an illegitimate flirtation, when he had often kissed her in the frankest manner under Nella's nose, and Meta drew back with a conscious blush.

"I only came to find a book," and having found it, she prepared to withdraw, feeling instinctively that she had intruded at an inopportune moment.

"Stay and have a game of billiards," said Godfrey, eagerly, his eyes lighting up at the sight of her.

"There is no time; the gong will sound in five minutes," wondering that he had the audacity to ask her.

"At any rate, we might begin, and finish the game after luncheon."

"We might, but I don't feel inclined," she said, coldly, as she moved towards the door.

Somerville walked quickly forward, and placed himself in front of her.

"I won't be treated like this," he said, in a low voice. "It isn't fair."

"Not fair?" and she opened her eyes to their widest extent.

"If it weren't for you I should be out of it."

"I haven't forgotten, but don't come near me, or speak to me more than you can help."

"I *must* speak to you," he muttered, as he stooped to pick up her handkerchief. "Be in the library at half-past six."

She shook her head determinedly. "Never again," then in a louder key, "Have you been teaching Meta how to play?"

"No, she never will learn. Her hands are too small to handle a cue." He looked at her as if longing to say more, but she turned away her head so as to avoid his glance.

"You seem to have forgotten your train," said Meta, quietly, from the other end of the table, where she had been arranging the cloth.

"Never was such a head as mine," with an impatient sigh; "I forget everything. There's only just time to catch it. Order the cart, there's a good girl, whilst I run upstairs to change my coat."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Eleanor Maynard walked about the house, and went through her usual avocations that day as if she were in a dream. Victor Maltravers, the man whom she had heard of either as a hero of romance or a cruel murderer—according to the private convictions of the speaker—was under the same roof with herself!

Mystery was in the very air she breathed, and she waited for every hour as it passed by, expecting it to bring a crisis. The suppressed excitement of the position helped her to bear up better than she might have done after the sudden blow of Cyril's approaching departure for India.

She was miserable when she stopped to think; but her own misfortunes seemed swallowed up in the more important events which were about to happen to other people.

It seemed strange to see them all sitting round the table at luncheon with calm faces, as if there were no storm about to break and shatter to pieces the even courses of their lives. Meta was rather pale, but Lady Somerville was perfectly placid, and her husband fully engrossed in the discussion of a recent poaching case. Mr. Mallon ate cold beef as calmly as if to-morrow night promised only a commonplace festivity, and when he met her eye returned her glance with quiet composure, as if they held no secret between them.

Could it be that yesterday she was standing face to face with Godfrey Somerville in the boudoir, pleading with him to spare his sinful life, and not ruthlessly take it with his own hands? Was it but an hour and a-half ago that she overheard that mysterious conversation in the library, when life and death seemed to hang on the hour of three on Wednesday morning?

It seemed impossible that all this could have happened and left no outward sign. She herself had narrowly escaped the greatest danger that a woman can run only the day before, yet here she was, sitting at the table with the rest, and a plate of *fricasséed* chicken before her.

After luncheon the three ladies went out for a drive, paid a few calls and returned about half-past four. Nella went straight to her room to take off her things, and stopped to write a letter to her aunt at Elstone before she went down. Christmas was near at hand, and there were a few old people in the village to whom she wished to send a small remembrance. They missed her bright face sadly when she ran away from them; but ever since she left she had taken care that they should not think themselves forgotten.

How pure and innocent the quiet life seemed amongst the old-fashioned homesteads! Somerville's warning on the first night of her arrival had been fully justified. Everyone around her seemed to be weaving a web of intrigue; and her own feet, in spite of all her self-confidence, had been completely entangled in its meshes.

She left her letter open in order to enclose a post-office order, when she had been able to get one, and went downstairs expecting to find her aunt and cousin in the boudoir. The five o'clock tea was ready on the dainty little table, but the room was empty. Wondering where they had gone, she sat down in a low chair close to the fire, and prepared to warm her toes.

She had so much on her mind that it was useless to attempt to read, and she was not one of those praiseworthy beings who can never be happy without some piece of work between their fingers. There was a sound of wheels on the gravel outside, but she took no notice of them. Even if it were Cyril come back from town, he had taken care to show her in the plainest way that she was nothing to him, so she would not disturb herself on his account.

Nevertheless, the colour deepened on her cheeks as she heard the door open behind her and a masculine footstep on the carpet; but it was Godfrey Somerville, and not Vere, who leant against the mantel-piece and stretched out his hands with a shiver towards the fire.

"This is better luck than I expected," he said, after a long silence. "Thank's to my aunt's passion for charity, I get you all to myself."

"Has the flannel come?"

"I saw whole bales of it on the library table—Meta with a pair of scissors as big as herself, aunt with her spectacles tumbling off the tip of her nose, and old Partington measuring off as fast as she could. Vere turned in to see if he could assist, but I came here."

"I must go and help them."

"Or talk to Vere—which is the most pressing?" he asked, with a sneer. "There is nothing for you to do, unless you wish to make him change his mind about India."

"That is no concern of mine."

"And yet you cannot rest here, as soon as you hear he is in another part of the house!"

"I might have another reason," her lip curling.

"Yes—to avoid me. And let me tell you, that isn't fair."

"Not fair? I don't understand you," waiting just as she was on the point of getting up from her chair.

"It is your fault that I am here at all," he said, sullenly.

"My *fault!* You ought to bless me for it."

"Much more inclined to curse you! It was no part of the bargain that you should make my existence unbearable."

"You could scarcely expect me to tolerate you after yesterday!"

"Then why, for Heaven's sake, didn't you let me die?" he cried, vehemently, stung to the quick by her manner.

"Because that would have been too horrible," shuddering at the remembrance.

"You think slow tortures better? I tell you death would have been a joke to it!"

"You forget that there is a hereafter," her voice was low and awe-struck.

"I don't care a hang what happens to me when I am once in the grave; but whilst I am here in the flesh, conscious of every passion that ever fretted the heart of man, now is the time for you to prove whether your Christianity is worth its salt. Nella, you must listen to me. Treat me like a dog, and I shall know that you only stopped my hand for the sake of gratifying your own spite."

"This, when you owe me everything!"

"I owe you nothing. All would have been over by this time, and my sins would have been forgiven as they cried their hearts out over my corpse."

"What do you wish me to do?" looking up at him with bewildered eyes.

"Nothing much," with a small smile, "only to be friends for a day and a-half." A day and a-half when he knew that he had the license in his pocket, which was to help him to bind her to him for ever!

"But you insulted me," in a low voice, as she turned away her head.

"I was mad. You can't judge me by what I did, when it seemed as if the world had come to an end and you were the angel sent to save me from despair. Besides, you said you forgave me."

"I wish you no harm."

"That is nothing—a hypocritical evasion. Do you think Vere and Mallon are blind? Of course, if you don't speak to me, and look daggers whenever I come near you, they will know that something happened yesterday which neither of us cared to confess."

"I am not in the least afraid!" drawing up her neck.

"You might be. A doubt is everything to a woman—nothing to a man."

"Those who know me——"

"Vere, for instance. He has shown himself so blindly trustful."

"As if I cared what he chose to fancy!"

"As if you didn't! Nell, you needn't try to humbug me. I have studied you till I know every in-and-out of your character. You are fond of him and you don't like me;" he gave a gulp as if the admission stuck in his throat; "but I think in common charity you might contrive to hide your hatred for a day and a-half. It isn't much to ask."

For a long time she looked at the fire without answering. In spite of all that he had done and left undone, her kindly heart pleaded for him at this the crisis of his life. She could not doubt that he was intensely miserable. Every object of his existence was lost, and there was literally nothing left him but a shipwrecked reputation.

After Tuesday what would he be but a ruined, desperate man, without the power to harm her—possibly without the wish? She imagined Meta, forlorn and broken hearted; robbed of her idol, cheated out of her sure possession; the hope, the happiness of her life bound to a dishonoured man. Her own injuries were as nothing compared with hers. She felt as if she herself could not have borne to find that Cyril Vere, her ideal of manly perfection, was infinitely lower than the lowest of the common herd. And Meta would have to bear this and worse.

"Godfrey," she said, with a tremble on her lips, "I did not mean to be cruel."

"I thought it was not like you," he said, hoarsely. "Oh, Nell! other people may preach and pray, but a true woman is better than a volume of sermons." He took her hand in his and stroked it tenderly. The mere touch of the soft, white fingers sent the blood coursing wildly through his veins, but he made a great effort to control himself.

"Now go," trying to withdraw her hand, "and tell Lady Somerville that the tea is getting cold."

"Let it freeze," he said, carelessly. "Do you know, this morning I tried to do my duty by Meta, but she won't give me up."

"What did she say?"

"That she liked me better than all the world," with a shrug of his shoulders. "Strange infatuation, isn't it?"

"Very strange. I wish I could cure her."

"You've done your best."

"Oh no. I could have done much more than that."

"You've hated me, and there is nothing so effective as example!"

"Then hers might have had some effect upon me."

"No. You were set against me from the first. I made a pretence of hating you, but I knew I was a fool for my pains."

"On the contrary, I think you succeeded admirably; and even now you are on the verge."

"Am I?" with an ironical smile. Then he stooped his head suddenly and pressed his lips passionately on the back of her left hand.

Just then the door was thrown wide open by Vere, and Lady Somerville, followed by her daughter, came into the room.

Nella's cheeks grew crimson, but Godfrey looked round with the utmost unconcern, knowing that if Vere had seen, the others must have been too late.

"It was your own fault," he said under his breath, as with a bitterly resentful glance she

wiped the soft, white skin with her pocket-handkerchief as if to erase a stain.

"I was just coming in to fetch you," she went on, in a louder key.

"Were you?" said Vere, incredulously. "You seemed too comfortable where you were!"

"My dear Nella, why did you wait for us?" and Lady Somerville sat down in her usual arm-chair with a sigh of relief, whilst Meta took her place by the tea-tray.

"One hundred and seventy-eight yards of flannel. I thought we should never get to the end of them!"

"Seen the old lady?" asked Godfrey, with an affectation of unusual friendliness. "Hope she's prepared to stump up something handsome!"

An expression of disgust crossed Vere's frank face.

"She seemed to think I had done a service to humanity by pulling you out of the water."

"And you didn't tell her that you wished a hundred times that you could have kicked me back again? I suppose you promised to send in your papers, and devote the rest of your life to winding her skeins of wool?"

"Of course. That sort of lap-dog existence would suit me exactly," glaring at him ferociously, whilst Nella looked drearily and thirstily at the fire, and wished that life were as soon over as a cup of tea.

CHAPTER XLV.

Godfrey Somerville stood on the hearth-rug in the drawing-room with a red camellia in his hand.

Everyone was there, ready and waiting, for dinner except Nella, who had broken her tucker string as she slipped the body of her dress over her head, and been consequently obliged to take it off again.

Meta watched the flower with curious eyes, wondering what was to be its destination. She had some scarlet anthuriums carefully intermingled with delicate ferns on the left side of her neck, so concluded that it was not for her. Presently she saw him raise the camellia to his lips, as if in absence of mind, and felt convinced that it could be for no one else.

"Who is that for, Godfrey?" she asked, with a conscious smile.

"For Nella," he said, as coolly as possible. "Nobody thinks of her unless I do."

The colour rushed into Vere's face, but he constrained himself not to show his intense disgust. "You see, you are the only man here," he said, coldly, "who has a right to pick Lady Somerville's flowers."

"The only man who does, at any rate. Don't wait any longer, uncle; I am sure she would not wish it. I'll stay behind and bring her in."

Vere measured him from head to foot, as if he were looking for the precise spot on which it was best to kick him; but at that moment, with many blushes and excuses, Nella hurried into the room,

"Here you are, my dear," said Sir Edward, cheerily. "The young men were just going to fight for the honour of waiting for you."

When they went into the dining-room, Godfrey deserted his usual place to take the next chair to hers, and directly grace was said stooped forward and laid the camellia beside her glasses.

"Nella never wears red," observed Meta, from across the table.

"She will to-night," he rejoined, confidently.

And to Meta's intense surprise, she being unconscious of the friendly compact for a day and a half, Nella took up the flowers with a pleasant smile and pinned it in the midst of the white lilies which she was wearing in the front of her dress.

It was a trifling incident, but Vere remembered that it only requires one straw to show which way the wind blows, and set his teeth in angry disappointment. What was the use of his giving up India in order the better to watch over her, if she were bent upon throwing herself away on a man whom she knew to be worthless? It would be only torture to him to watch her descent; and if he stretched out a hand to help her she was certain not to use it, but to push it on one side.

Lady Somerville roused him from his gloomy reflections.

"Is it true that we are to lose you and your friend on Wednesday next? It seems such a pity to break up the party such a short while before Christmas. I wish we could persuade you to stay a little longer."

"You are very kind, and I've enjoyed my stay here awfully," he said, with a smile; "but I'm bound by an old promise to spend Christmas with the Arkwrights, and that will only allow me a few days at home first."

"And a very poor allowance, I should call it, if I were your mother," thinking how proud she would have been to have had this fair-haired soldier for a son.

"My mother is one of the best of women, and so contented with her lot that she can do without anything or anybody that she cannot get."

"How many years of deprivation has it taken to teach her that hard lesson?" shaking her head in gentle reproof.

"I assure you I'm quite an unnecessary part of the household. My cousin will tell you the same," in earnest self-defence.

"Many people think pleasure an unnecessary part of life," said Nella, with a quiet smile. "My aunt may be one of them."

Vere coloured.

"I was talking of myself, not pleasure."

"Your mother might think they went or came together. I'm not talking of *myself*," she added, hurriedly; "but mothers generally like their sons."

"She likes me, of course; but both she and my father take me philosophically, like a dose of medicine."

"A very convenient theory," put in Meta, looking amused, "when you want to spend your Christmas away from your own home. For my own part, I think if you don't go to Elstone you ought to stay here, where you have one relation at least."

Cyril cast one eager look at Nella, but her eyes were fixed on Sir Edward, who happened to be talking of the meet at Copplestone, though her ears were shut to what he was saying, and she missed it.

Bending down, as if deeply interested in the *entrée* on his plate, he said, hurriedly,—

"You have made her so thoroughly one of yourselves, a cousin is nowhere."

"Meta is her sister, and I am her brother," said Godfrey, coolly. "Somerville Hall will provide her with enough relations without troubling anyone else."

"You have got nothing to do with her at all!" broke out Cyril, furiously. "There is no tie between you of any kind whatever. Thank Heaven as long as I'm alive she needn't search the world for any other man to stand by her like a brother!"

Nella's eyes filled with tears, and her hands trembled in her lap. Meta looked anxiously from Vere's flushed face to Godfrey's, which was white with rage.

"I'll give up the relationship, but mind *you* stick to it!"

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Mallon, trying to calm the troubled atmosphere with an attempt at a joke, "amateur brothers are apt to forget their parts."

"Not when there is no other left them," grimly from Cyril.

"What is that about being 'more than kin, and less than kind?'" inquired Lady Somerville, vaguely, perfectly unaware of the storm which was grumbling around her.

(To be continued.)

Government pastry—a Mint spy.

EVER FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

My love and I, by the sunset's glow,
Watched the waves' unceasing flow,
As they broke on the glistening sand.
My kisses warm on her red lips burned,
Her trusting gaze to mine upturned.
She murmured low, as hand clasped hand:
"Ever faithful and true."

"Though by grief and sorrow you are tempest-tossed,
Though the world condemns, and friends are lost,
I will love you, dear.
And amid the cares and trials of life,
One haven you'll have, when storms are rife;
One warm heart always near,
Ever faithful and true."

Lulled by the love-light, beaming bright,
In the tender blue of her eye's soft light,
My heart's whole trust was given;
And, bound by a tress of burnished gold,
A slave she made me, heart and soul;
I wished no higher heaven.
Ever faithful and true!

But one short year, and on that sea-beat shore,
Alone I wander—alone for evermore!
While westward sinks the sun—
Low hang the clouds, the muttering thunder nears;
Low moan the waves, to my dull, despairing ears:
"Thy day of joy is done."
Ever faithful and true!

L. D. B.

REDEEMED BY FATE.

CHAPTER XXX.

And so, a few days later on, the great roomy barouche was brought to the door; and Muriel, wrapped in a big, sable-lined cloak, and leaning on her husband's arm, came slowly down the staircase and got in, assisted by Haidée, who was bravely trying to restrain her tears at the idea of saying good-bye.

Sybil stood on the threshold, two deep red spots glowing in her otherwise pallid cheeks; while she watched, with a basilisk kind of fascination, the husband and wife she had done her best to separate.

"I wish you were coming with us," whispered Muriel to Haidée.

"And oh! how fervently I echo the wish!" murmured the young girl, in the same tone.

"But you will write!"

"Why should I? What"—with a melancholy smile—"shall I have pleasant to tell you?"

"You know anything that concerns your welfare will interest me."

"Will it? Then I will write—if only to tell you how sorry I am that you are away."

"You must come back in time for the wedding-day, Lady Urwicke," said Sir Jasper, stepping forward to shake hands with his departing guest. "You will be quite well and strong by that time I hope."

Muriel smiled, but did not reply, and then held out her hand to Sybil.

"Good-bye, Miss Ruthven. I thank you many times for the kindness you have shown me during my stay at Heatholiff Priors."

"The kindness I have shown you has fallen far short of my intentions!" Sybil replied, with a cold flash of her eyes, and a slightly spasmodic movement of the lip. "Believe me, I wish I had succeeded better!"

She watched them as they drove off—and both Claud and Muriel breathed a sigh of relief as the ivy-covered front of Heatholiff Priors became hidden in the distance.

Very different, indeed, was Lord Urwicke's behaviour now from what it had been the last time they had travelled together—on their wedding-day. Then he had been dull, absent, distrait, wrapped in gloomiest meditations;

now, all his time and thoughts seemed occupied in the task of ministering to his wife's comfort, and seeing that she lacked nothing money or thoughtfulness could procure.

He had had a saloon carriage added to the train, and here she lay reclining on a couch, propped up by pillows, a bouquet of hot-house flowers on her lap, and a whole army of magazines at her side.

"Do you feel fatigued by the drive?" he asked, anxiously.

"Not in the least, thank you."

"Here is your flask of eau de Cologne," producing it. "You see, I have not forgotten anything."

"You are very good to me," she murmured, turning away her head, so that he should not see the tear-mist clouding her eyes; for she was still very weak, and far from being the self-controlled Muriel of old days.

He checked the reply that rose to his lips. He had been thinking over all the events of their married life, and, in spite of the assignation he believed he had witnessed between her and Philip, he resolved to set himself the task of winning her love. Yes, though it should be one of more difficulty than had ever before fallen to his lot!

He remembered what she had said the night when he thought her dying, and this encouraged him to hope; but, he told himself, he must not be too precipitate; he must be content to wait for months'—perhaps years—and in the end he would be amply repaid if he only succeeded in his endeavour.

He pointed out to her the various objects of interest they passed on their route, and thus enlivened the tedium of the journey.

"It is a brighter day than when we came from London, and everything looks quite different," Muriel remarked. And she was right. Then it had been raining and dreary; now the sun was shining on the yellow cornfields, on the tangled luxuriance of the hedgerows, on the silvery brooks, in their forget-me-not fringed channels; on Nature smiling up at the azure August skies.

Claud wanted her to break her journey; but she declared she felt strong enough to go on to her destination; and so, late in the evening, they arrived at Cowes; and somehow, by the very force of contrast, it reminded her of that other miserable home-coming, not so very long ago, when Sybil's evil beauty had met her on the threshold of Urwicke Towers, and Sybil's mocking voice had bidden her "Welcome!"

Life was quite another thing here; and as the days went by, each one giving her fresh vigour, her heart grew buoyant with hope—hope so sweet, that if fulfilled, it would indeed amply repay her for all she had suffered.

They were out-of-doors nearly all day, he and she, and the two dogs they had brought with them—Turk, an apoplectic, but good-natured bull-terrier of exuberant spirits, much given to the worrying of his own tail, and Gyp, Lord Urwicke's collie. Claud invariably gave her the support of his arm, and listened with a pleased smile as she expressed her delight in watching the dimpling sea, whose mysterious diapason was always in their ears, sounding like a deep, uncomprehended harmony, the key-note of which so few can ever find.

One day he entered her sitting-room without knocking, just as she had seated herself at her desk with the intention of writing to Haidée, from whom she had that morning received a letter. He paused on the threshold looking at her, perhaps admiring the grace of the attitude in which she had unconsciously posed herself; and she, unaware of his presence, suddenly raised to her lips a little faded bunch of flowers she had taken out of the desk, and kissed them passionately.

At the same moment the handle of the door fell back, and the slight noise made her glance up with quick alarm. As she saw who was there, a bright rose colour spread itself over her cheeks, and she held her hands above the flowers as if to hide them.

"What have you there, Muriel?"

"Nothing—at least, nothing of any consequence."

"May I judge for myself?" advancing to her side, and speaking rather sternly, while he held out his hand.

"No," she said, in confusion; "it is really nothing that would repay your trouble."

"You can't answer for me on such a point. I *wish*"—with emphasis on the word—"to see what your hand covers!"

"And I do *not* wish it!" she replied, a certain rebellious spirit visible in her voice.

"Suppose I should *insist*?"

"It would be equally useless, for I should still maintain my right to refuse; but, however, we will put an end to the matter—thus," and she threw the flowers in the fire that was burning on the earth.

As a matter-of-fact, they were some he himself had given her on the night of their betrothal; but he had no remembrance of the circumstance, and she was half disappointed, half relieved when she saw, by the expression with which he watched the brown leaves catch the flames, that he had not the faintest idea of their identity.

"Is that wifely obedience?" he asked, trying to keep his temper, and speak playfully, but hardly succeeding.

"I do not think it was worth while testing your authority over such a trivial matter."

"It may not have been so trivial, after all. Suppose those flowers were a love-token!"

She was silent.

"Have I hit the mark, Muriel?" watching her anxiously.

Still no rejoinder.

"Silence, you know, means consent; but, for my own part, I prefer verbal replies," he said, beating an impatient tattoo with his foot on the ground. "Answer this one question, Muriel, and I promise it shall be the last. Did a gentleman give you those flowers?"

"Yes."

Lord Urwicke made no remark, but walked over to the window—seeing nothing of the view before him, although he gazed at it intently. He had fancied he was making such progress in his wooing, and now he found his wife kissing a bouquet of withered blossoms that he had not the slightest doubt Philip Greville had given her. All his dreams were dashed to the ground, and he felt farther than ever off the end he had set himself. Should he *ever* succeed, or would the artist's handsome face always interpose its barrier between him and happiness?

He muttered a few words below his breath, and those words were not exactly the invoking of blessings on Philip's head.

CHAPTER XXXI.

In obedience to Greville's telegram, Mr. Pierson had procured a room at A——'s Hotel, and, of course, concluded he should see the artist on the following morning.

Matthew Seaforth, according to the arrangements they had previously made, was at the Temple in good time. He considered himself a business man, and made a rule of always securing punctuality by being half-an-hour too early.

"I little thought when I wrote to you from Melbourne, and told you to look out for traces of my sister, how soon you would succeed," he observed, sitting opposite the barrister, with his brown, weather-beaten face all aglow. "Poor Grace, if she had only lived!"

"And no doubt is left on your mind with regard to this young man's identity?"

"None whatever! His likeness to his mother is sufficient of itself! I am pleased with his appearance—there is something manly, straightforward, and honest about him! He does not look as if he would ever descend to a mean or dishonourable action."

"You are right! I have known him a good many years, and I have always found him one of the best fellows going. He is clever, too, and will make a name in the world by his pictures."

"There will be no necessity for his painting any more," observed Seaforth, who, practical business man as he was, had small sympathy with, or comprehension of, art. "I have more money than I can spend; and he is my heir, so he'll be independent of work."

Pierson smiled. He, who knew Philip, also knew that the possession of Croesus' wealth would not make him forsake his beloved art; but this opinion he kept to himself—the old man would find it out quite soon enough.

"Your next step must be to make sure of the man who took Grace away," went on Seaforth, who had unlimited confidence in the barrister's abilities, "and then we must endeavour to get proofs of the marriage."

Pierson was silent. Believing as he did that Sir Jasper Ruthven was the mysterious "Philip," whose signature was at the bottom of the lost packet of letters, he very much doubted whether they would ever obtain such proofs

If they could only find those letters, and compare the writing with Sir Jasper's own, then all doubt would, so far, be set at rest.

"Greville is behind," he observed, glancing at his watch; "it is a quarter of an hour later than the time we specified yesterday, but perhaps he has forgotten what that time was, for his manner seemed strange and preoccupied, and it strikes me things were not running quite smoothly at the Priors."

The quarter lengthened into half-an-hour, that in its turn to an hour, and then Pierson began to grow slightly uneasy.

"I never knew him disappoint me before," he said. "I will send over to A——'s hotel and make inquiries."

He despatched his clerk, who presently returned, saying Mr. Greville was not there. His luggage, however, had just arrived.

"His luggage!" repeated Pierson, surprised. "Then he must have left the Priors for good, and yet he never said a word about it yesterday! What a very singular thing he hasn't turned up!"

"Perhaps he missed his train!" suggested the colonist.

"No; for from his telegram I concluded he purposed starting last night; and even if he had deferred his journey until this morning, he should have been here long ago—should have come by the same train as his luggage, in fact! I cannot understand the occurrence at all, because, knowing we were awaiting him, he would surely have wired had anything happened to prevent his leaving. It is altogether most strange!"

Seaforth could give him no assistance whatever, and presently the barrister went to an office close at hand, and sent a telegram to Philip at Heathcliff Priors, with the answer prepaid.

The answer when it came was in the name of Sir Jasper Ruthven, and all it contained were these words,—

"Mr. Greville left here last night, presumably for London. Have no further knowledge of his movements."

Pierson was completely mystified. If the young man had left Heathcliff last night, where had he gone?

"It is not as if he were a stranger to London, and did not know his way about," he said to Seaforth; "he is as well acquainted with all the ins-and-outs of the metropolis as I am myself. And it is not as if he were reckless of the inconvenience to which he put other people—as a matter-of-fact, it is quite the reverse, for he is, I have observed, singularly tenacious of keeping his word. I really am inclined to feel concerned about his absence."

"I don't think there is any necessity for being so!" answered the elder man. "So many unforeseen things happen, you know, and I don't see how anything could be the matter! You'll hear from him in the course of to-day or to-morrow, depend upon it!"

But both that day and the next passed, and still no tidings came, and on the third Pier-

son grew really alarmed, and resolved to go to Heathcliff and make inquiries.

He arrived at the Priors in the afternoon, and was shown into Sir Jasper's study, where the baronet was sitting alone, engaged in looking over some papers.

"I must introduce myself," he said, bowing. "My name, as you will have seen from my card, is Pierson, and my reason for trespassing on your time is to ask if you are in a position to give me any information with regard to Mr. Greville."

"None whatever, beyond that conveyed by my telegram," replied Sir Jasper, courteously, motioning him to be seated. "He left, as I told you, on Thursday night, and I have not since heard anything of him."

"But his departure must have been sudden?"

"It was, rather!"

"And—pray excuse the question—was there any reason for it?"

"Yes," answered the baronet, boldly. "He and I had a difference of opinion on a certain subject, and he took offence at what I said. He is rather hot-headed, I believe."

"Indeed! I was not aware of it. May I ask if your 'difference of opinion' was likely to influence his conduct so much as to cause him to alter plans previously made?"

"I don't know. I cannot be expected to understand his character well enough to answer such a question."

Pierson did not speak for a few minutes, and both men spent the interval in studying each other closely, although a casual observer would have remarked nothing in the demeanour of either denoting the fact.

"I suppose Greville mentioned London as his probable destination when he wished you good-bye?"

"He did not wish me good-bye at all!"

"Nor any of the members of your household?"

"To the best of my belief not!"

"But that was singular, wasn't it?"

The baronet shrugged his shoulders.

"As I said before, I am not in a position to answer for his peculiarities!"

"But he seems to have left orders about the forwarding of his luggage?"

"Yes, with the butler, I believe. You are at liberty to have him in and question him if you think it will assist you in any way!"

"Thank you! As you have no objection, I will do so."

Sir Jasper accordingly rang the bell, and Purser entered the room.

He could only repeat what his master had already said, namely, that Philip had spoken to him about his trunks, and said he was going to town that night, but that he thought it would be more convenient to have the luggage forwarded on next day.

"What time was that?" asked Pierson.

"About seven o'clock, as near as I can say, sir!"

"And you did not see Mr. Greville after?"

"Yes, I saw him leave the house a little while later. He went through the side door, and that's the last I saw of him."

"And the rest of the household?"

"They don't know anything more about it than I do, sir; for no one noticed him go out except me!"

"Thank you!" said Pierson, and the man left the room. "I am sorry to have given you this trouble, Sir Jasper," he added, rising, and preparing to go, "but you will acknowledge the affair looks rather mysterious!"

"No doubt it will be capable of a satisfactory explanation later on," rejoined the baronet, opening the door for his visitor. "I regret I have not been able to render you more assistance. When you hear anything, please let me know."

After he had left, Sir Jasper gazed through the window till his retreating figure was lost in the bend of the avenue. His first impression had been that the avowed reason of the visit was only a ruse for seeing him, and trying to obtain tidings of Grace Seaforth on behalf of her brother. But this idea vanished under the influence of Pierson's evidently perturbed manner, and he now entertained no doubt of the genuineness of his motives.

"I wonder where he can have got to!" he muttered, referring to the young artist. "For my own part, I shall be only too delighted if he keeps out of my way for an indefinite period."

On leaving Heathcliff Priors Pierson went straight to the station, and there pursued his inquiries, but with a very uncertain result. The clerk at the Telegraph-office perfectly well remembered Philip sending the message, and a porter said he had noticed Mr. Greville on the platform, just before the London train came up, but whether he got in or not he could not say; for, owing to Westford Fair, there were so many passengers that night who went by it. All the information he could give was that Philip did *not* travel in the later express; and with this the inquirer had to rest content, and turned away, feeling in a greater fog than ever.

It was not as if Greville had relations or friends to go to, or as if he did not attach due importance to the interview that was to take place; for the contrary, he had shown the greatest eagerness to clear up the mystery surrounding his parentage, and yet, when the opportunity offered, he absented himself without even sending an excuse!

It was strange, very, and the more the barrister pondered the more puzzled he became. Had he really left for London, and been robbed, or—something worse?

He did not put his fears in words, but took the next train to town, and drove to a Private Inquiry Office, with which his profession had made him acquainted; and there he related the whole case, and left instructions to the effect that neither trouble or expense was to be spared in sifting it to the bottom. He also put the following advertisement in the morning papers:—"Philip Greville, who is supposed to have left Heathcliff, Thursday,——August, is earnestly requested to communicate tidings of his whereabouts to R. Pierson, who anxiously awaits them."

And, having done this, he was brought to a stand still, for he really did not know what steps to take next.

* * * * *

"Have you any news?" asked Matthew Seaforth, coming into his chambers a few days later.

"None of the least consequence," was the moody reply.

"Hasn't the office helped you at all?"

"Very little, indeed. Inquiries have been made at all the stations where the train by which he is supposed to have come stopped, as well as at the terminus; but no one seems to have noticed him—which is strange, as his long hair made him rather remarkable."

"Then it appears probable he never left Heathcliff," observed Seaforth, who was by this time fully as much alarmed as the barrister.

"But where could he be hiding *there*?—what motive would he have for concealing himself?"

Seaforth shook his head, and lapsed into silence. He left it to Pierson—whose business it was—to find out the motive.

"I have started all sorts of hypothesis—I have thought of everything probable and improbable," continued Pierson, "and yet, I confess, I am as far off the truth as ever. It is a puzzle, and we are groping about in the dark to find the key."

"Was Philip *in love*?" suddenly inquired Seaforth; and Pierson started, for, strange as it may appear, this was the last idea that occurred to him.

"Not that I know of—he never said anything to me about it; but then, on such a subject, I don't suppose he would care to talk."

"Because," went on the colonist, with the simple gravity characteristic of him, "I have heard of people, when they are in love, doing all sorts of strange things—leaving their homes without saying a word to anyone, or even *committing suicide!*"

Pierson laughed.

"I have no fear of the latter. Greville was not the sort of man to take his own life. But about this love theory—why, there may be something in it, and, what's more, it may help us. Perhaps it would also explain his anxiety to get back home the day we last saw him, and, if so, it follows that the lady must be there. By Jove! Seaforth, I believe you have hit the right nail on the head at last!"

"Then let us both go down to Heathcliff," said the old man. "I intended visiting it, though not for this purpose. We can make inquiries better on the spot than by any other means."

Pierson acquiesced. He had no pressing professional engagements to hinder him just now; and so that same night they had taken up their quarters at the Ruthven Arms, the only inn the village could boast, and it speedily became known to the gossips that they had come for the purpose of tracing the handsome young artist who used to be at the Priors.

The night of their arrival they started out together, and Seaforth pointed to his companion the various landmarks which had been so familiar to his boyhood.

"The place has not changed much in all these years," he said, gazing round with some emotion, as they passed down the straggling village street. "The houses look exactly as they used, the pavements are just as uneven. There is the village pound where we used to scramble in and out, and I could imagine those geese nibbling on the common to be the very same ones we boys chased years and years ago. Ah, Mr. Pierson!"—with a sigh—"there's as much of sorrow as joy in coming back to one's old home, even though one's pockets be no longer empty!"

"I believe you," returned the barrister, who, man of the world as he was, yet sympathised with the old colonist's feelings. "How many years is it since you were here before?"

"Getting on for thirty. I was a young man then, wanting to push my way in the world and make a fortune for myself, and now I've made it, and am old, and take no pleasure in spending it. Well, well, life's a strange thing—very strange! I suppose we shall know the ins-and-outs of it by-and-by, but few people discover them *this* side the grave!"

It was a very calm evening, the red sun sinking low down in the west, and casting level shadows athwart the thatched roofs of the houses—shining, too, in a crimson glory on the queer little leaden-cased panes of the windows.

Work was over for the day, and the women had come out of their cottage doors to have a gossip with each other, and shouted a noisy reproof to the groups of children "to get out of the gentlemen's way!"—a behest the latter obeyed by standing stock-still, and staring in open-mouthed astonishment, as if visitors were a sort of *rara avis*, but seldom seen, and appreciated accordingly.

"Why, there's the old bowling-green!" exclaimed Seaforth, indicating it. "Many's the game of bowls I've had there, and with the young gentlemen from Heathcliff Priors, too; for Master Charles, as well as Sir Jasper that now is, were as fond of coming down and playing as if they'd been one of us."

"Times have changed with Sir Jasper since then," observed Pierson.

"You are right, sir. We little thought Mr. Charles—fine, handsome young fellow as he was—would go before him. I read an account of his death in the newspapers out in Australia."

"It was he who fell over the cliffs, was it not?"

"Yes. They are very dangerous, those cliffs, just by Heathcliff Priors, and the path leading to the house is close to the edge. You don't think"—stopping suddenly, and facing the barrister—"Philip can have slipped over?"

"No, certainly not!" was the response;

though the speaker's face grew white even as he negatived the suggestion. "If such a thing had happened his body would have been found."

"That doesn't follow at all, for it might easily be washed out to sea."

"Let us go there," said Pierson, endeavouring to speak lightly. "I suppose you remember the way?"

"Remember the way!" repeated the old man, smiling with some scorn; "I fancy I do. In my youth there wasn't a man in Heathcliff, except, perhaps, one, who knew the place so well as I did; and many's the risk I've run down on the shore there—risks the coastguardmen never suspected."

"What! was smuggling carried on here then?"

"Well, sir, just a little; nothing to hurt, you know," responded Seaforth, sheepishly, and with a cossical smile. "I don't mean to say it was a general thing, but I did a bit on my own account."

"Alone?"

"Not quite. There was a German who came to live at Heathcliff. His name was Hermann, and he used to arrange about the things being sent over, and he and I met them on this side."

"But how could two carry on the business without being discovered?"

"Why, you see, we had exceptional advantages, because I knew every inch of the coast; and, besides, we had a safe place for stowing the things away—a cave with a door out in the rock, that no one knew anything at all about excepting ourselves, and whose secret we promised each other faithfully nothing should ever induce us to betray. I wonder whether Hermann has kept his word as well as I have mine? I must see him, and ask him some time before we leave."

CHAPTER XXXII.

With the departure of Lady Urwicke, Haidée felt she had lost her only friend; for although between herself and Sybil a certain amount of intimacy had perforce arisen, there was nothing spontaneous in it—none of the affection with which she had grown to regard Muriel in these last few weeks.

In her own heart the young girl did not think it strange that Philip should have gone away without bidding her farewell.

She imagined his departure was the result of the conversation in which she had implored him to leave, and said to herself he had given a proof of love by obeying her wishes.

She tried very hard to school herself to the lot Fate had ordained her, but each hour only seemed to make it more difficult to endure, and there were times when her heart cried out in anguished rebellion against it.

During these days Sybil saw very little of her, for the baronet's sister kept principally in her own rooms, and seemed wrapped in a cloak of icy indifference that rendered her unmindful of what was going on around her.

But never did she breathe one word of her sorrow, or even let its cause be guessed.

Pride came to her aid, whispering that unless she made an effort to hide it, the true reason of her misery might be imagined, and the world would point at her as a woman who had been jilted, and still pined over the loss of her lover.

No, she told herself, fiercely, she would give no dawa a chance of pecking at her heart by carrying it on her sleeve—she had conquered herself before, and would again, though she died in the attempt!

And that indomitable will that had crushed down so many obstacles in the past did a still harder work, and crushed down her agony now.

Sometimes she told herself it could not last long, the strain was too great; but at the future she steadily refused to look—and, indeed, all her resolution was required in facing the present.

One evening Haidée, having a slight headache, made it the excuse for leaving the drawing-room almost directly after dinner, and told her maid to brush out her hair, before binding it up for the night.

The maid was rather a loquacious damsel, whose love for the sound of her own tongue was second only to her devotion to her young mistress.

"It's very queer, this about Mr. Greville, isn't it, miss?" she said, drawing the ivory brushes very slowly through the long bright curls, as if she liked the task.

"*What* is queer?" asked the young girl, startled.

"Haven't you heard that he can't be found?" stopping her employment, and staring hard at Haidée through the glass. "Why, miss, there was an advertisement in the *Times*—the butler read it out to us the other evening—and it offered a reward for any information about him. And there are two gentlemen staying at the Ruthven Arms who've come a-purpose to make inquiries."

Haidée said nothing, and presently the maid continued,—

"He's never been seen since the night Lady Urwicke was so bad, and no one knows for certain whether he left Heathcliff or not. They do say"—dropping her voice to a whisper, and intensely enjoying the startling nature of the communication she was about making—"that he fell over the cliffs and was drown*ded!*"

"Oh no!" cried Haidée, involuntarily, and then she hastily dismissed the girl, and was left alone to face the horror of the thought, which was one that made her very heart stand still.

Drowned—Philip drowned! Impossible! She would not believe that brave young life had found an end in such a fate; but her brain began to whirl, and her breath came short and fast with a dim horror at the mere suggestion. How could she lie down and rest while in this chaos of doubt and perplexity—what could she do to resolve it?

She threw the window wide open, and gazed out on the soft, starless dusk of the August night, and then an idea came to her—wild and reckless if you will, but surely in keeping with her love! She would go down to the village, now, at once, and see these two strangers who had come to make inquiries, and who would be able to tell her something of her lover—something that, however vague, would at least be better than her present ignorance.

She did not stay to think of what would be said if her visit came to the ears of Sir Jasper, or her father—she did not even pause to listen to the warning her own reason gave of its recklessness, but hurried on a large dark cloak, the hood of which she drew over her head, and then with swift, silent footsteps, ran along the corridors, reached the "haunted wing," and left the house by the same exit Philip had made use of when he went to the station.

Once outside, she breathed a sight of relief—thank Heaven! no one had seen her. She knew her way to the village, and so she sped quickly on, a moving shadow under the still shadows of the trees.

It was a very dark night; there was no moon, there were no stars—a dense hush, as of a silence that could be *felt* hung in the air like a living presence. Not a branch moved, or a leaf stirred—it was as if Nature lay expectant, waiting for the battle of the elements she knew was impending.

It was not yet late; nine struck out from the stable clock as Haidée was in the park, and the strokes fell in dull, vibrationless tones on the stagnant air. She heard them, and hurried on the faster, conscious of a strange sense of mystery and solitude at finding herself thus alone in the darkness—a sense of acting *outside herself*, as it were, driven along by the force of circumstances that left her no volition of her own.

At last the grounds of Heathcliff Priors were left behind, and she was in the village—deserted now save where a little knot of men stood by the door of the inn, talking and laughing loudly.

They stopped and stared when they saw the long cloaked figure whose face was hidden; and Haidée drew back in painful confusion, remembering for the first time that she knew nothing of the names of the strangers she had come to seek, and keenly sensitive to the curious glances and remarks to which it was likely she would be exposed. What should she do—push through that crowd, and boldly state her business inside?

Her courage failed her, and she felt almost inclined to turn round and retrace her footsteps without having accomplished her purpose, only the thought of Philip stopped her; and she still stood hesitating, unaware that though her back was turned to the curious loungers at the door, the light of a side window was falling full upon her beautiful, troubled face, and revealing its expression of pained embarrassment.

Robert Pierson happened to see her as he was returning from the Post-office, and it needed no second glance to tell him this was not one of the villagers. He paused a moment, then went up to her, removing his hat.

"I beg your pardon—you seem to have lost your way. Can I do anything for you?"

She raised her eyes with a look of eager relief.

"Oh! yes, if you will be so kind. There are two gentlemen, strangers, staying here"—indicating the inn with a movement of her hand—"and I want to see them. Can you tell me their names?"

The barrister seemed puzzled.

"The only two visitors are Mr. Seaforth and myself—my name is Pierson."

"Robert Pierson?"

"The same!" still more puzzled.

"And you are here to get news of Philip Greville?" she went on, with deepening excitement.

"Yes. Are you in a position to help me?"

"Alas! no. I have come for information myself."

Pierson glanced round. Where they stood they could be seen by those at the door, even if what they said could not be heard. He took Haidée gently by the arm and led her under a large chesnut tree some paces off, and here they were quite concealed from view, as well as being out of earshot.

"Now tell me in what way I can help you," he said, kindly, "and, believe me, to the best of my ability I will do so."

"Mr. Greville was a friend of mine—he once saved my life, and I am interested in him," she began, nervously. "To-night I was told something had happened to him, and so I wanted to hear."

"You come from Heathcliff Priors?" he asked, for it struck him that he recognized her as the lady he had once seen driving with Sir Jasper, and who had been pointed out to him as the baronet's betrothed bride.

"Yes."

"It is very kind of you to take so much trouble—I wish I were able to tell you anything that would repay it, but, unfortunately, I am in a state of ignorance myself. It is true Philip Greville has been missing for some time, and I have come here for the purpose of finding a clue to his whereabouts. So far we have been unsuccessful."

"But"—with a quick catching of the breath—"you do not think he is *dead!*"

Pierson shook his head.

"I think not—I hope not; but his disappearance is very strange, and, I confess, I hardly know what opinion to adopt."

"Tell me all you *do* know—all there is to tell!" she cried, impulsively; and he complied.

After he had finished, Haidée laid her hand on his sleeve in her eagerness.

"Then do you mean he has not been seen since the porter spoke to him at the station?" she asked.

"To the best of my belief he has not."

"And what time was that?"

"Half-past seven."

"But I myself saw him at *eight!*" she exclaimed, with trembling excitement. "The household seemed all upset that night, and

["ANSWER THIS ONE QUESTION, MURIEL," SAID LORD URWICKE. "DID A GENTLEMAN GIVE YOU THOSE FLOWERS?"]

dinner was put off an hour later because of the expected arrival of Lord Urwicke and the London doctor—in point of fact, there was no regular meal, for we were all too much concerned about Lady Urwicke to think of anything else; and it happened that I was at my window, watching, when I saw Philip come from the shrubbery, and, no doubt, he entered the house by the side door."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Positive—I could not have made a mistake with regard to him."

"Then he did not go to London at all!" exclaimed Pierson; "for the porter can swear he was not in the midnight express, and now it is clear he did not travel by the earlier train. This draws the affair to a narrower radius, even while it deepens the mystery."

He was silent for a few minutes, thinking. His penetration had quickly discovered that the "interest" the young girl avowed in Philip was more than a friendly one, and thus Seaforth's surmise was proved to have been correct. Haidée Darrell *loved* Philip, and she was the affianced wife of Sir Jasper Ruthven—might not these two circumstances have some bearing on the matter he was engaged in sifting?

The sound of the church clock chiming out the quarter-to-ten made Haidée start.

"I must go," she said. "No one knows I am out, and it will not do for me to be late in returning."

"I will escort you, if you will allow me," he responded; and she did not demur, for the prospect of her lonely walk back had been far from a pleasant one.

"There will be a storm before long," he predicted, as they passed through the little gate leading into the park; "but I think you will be home in time to escape it."

He paused for a few minutes, then added, with a slight hesitation,—

'Have you any reason to suppose Sir Jasper Ruthven and Greville had had a quarrel that Thursday? You are, of course, at perfect liberty to refuse answering this question, if you like."

"I cannot say whether they had actually *quarrelled*, but they had an interview, and—and, I know they didn't like each other."

Her tone was even more suggestive than the words themselves.

"If," she continued, tremblingly, "you *should* hear anything, will you let me know?"

"I will, directly—indeed, whether I hear anything or not, I will communicate with you."

"Thank you!"

"And if, on the other hand, there should come to your knowledge any circumstance likely to aid our search, you will let me hear from you?"

"Oh! yes."

"Have you a messenger you can trust?"

"I think so—my maid would do anything I asked her!"

"That is well."

By this time they had come to the shrubbery, and here they parted—the girl running across the terrace to the side door. Just as she was about entering, a figure stepped out from the darkness, and, her heart beating with terror, she recognized it as Sir Jasper himself.

"*Haidée!*" he exclaimed, in strongly marked accents of surprise. "What brings you here?"

No answer. Haidée dare not tell the truth, and she was not quick at coining excuses.

"I thought you went to your room with a bad headache!" went on Sir Jasper, unaware of the help he was giving her by the suggestion.

"So I did," she said, quickly; "and then I thought a little fresh air would do me good, so—so I took a run in the dark."

He looked suspicious—only half satisfied with her excuse.

"Alone?" he asked.

"Certainly; whom had I to go with?"

"I must request you to refrain from such freaks in the future!" he said, with some irritation. "It is far from correct for my promised wife to be wandering about alone at ten o'clock at night; and, more than that, I will not permit it. And by-the-bye, that reminds me of something I wished to tell you. I have had a letter from your father, who has consented to come to our wedding, but says it is such an ordeal for him that he is anxious to get it over as soon as possible. This being so, I think we had better hasten our marriage!"

"Oh! no," cried Haidée, involuntarily, and putting up her hands to her burning cheeks, which she was thankful the darkness hid.

"Your preparations are nearly complete, are they not?" asked the Baronet, as if he had not heard her.

"Yes," unwillingly.

"And your wedding-dress ready?"

"I believe so."

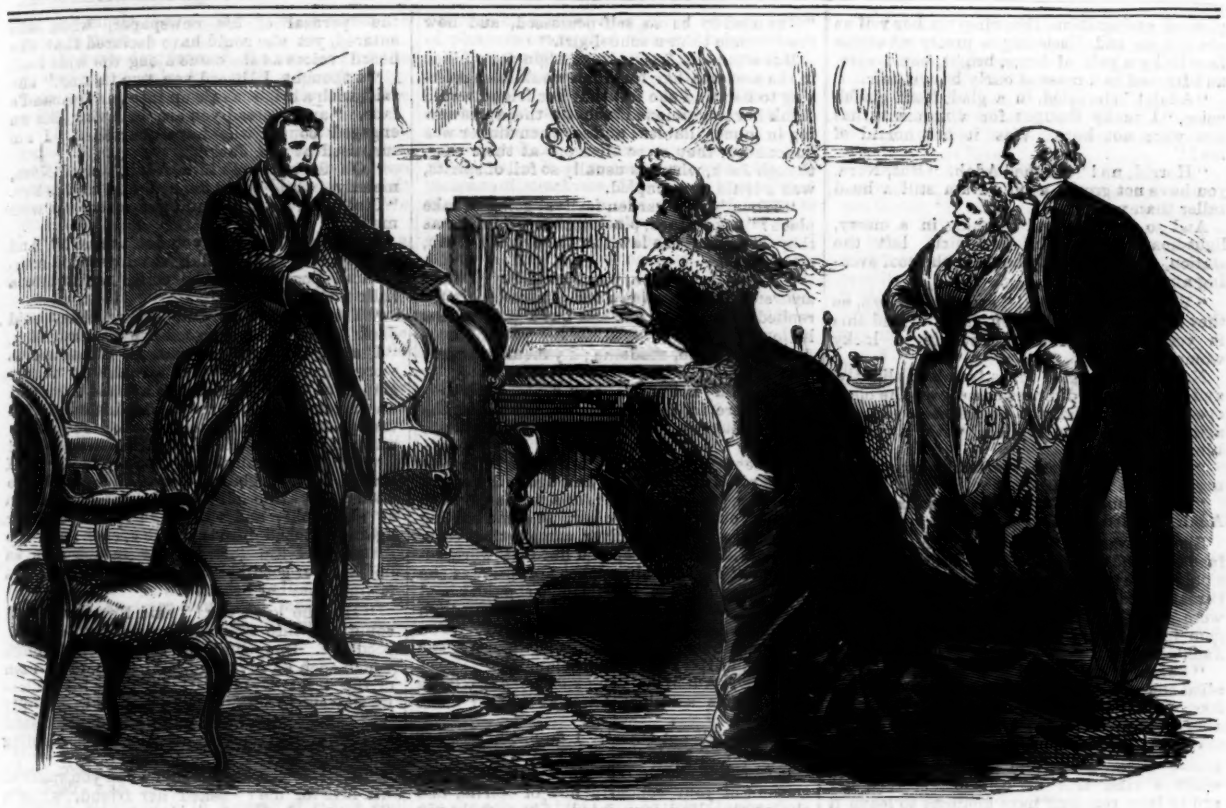
"I suppose that means you *know* it is? Well, this being the case, there is no necessity for postponing the ceremony, and, instead of September, we will have it the end of August—a week from to-morrow. Seven days is ample time for issuing invitations; and that is all that remains to be done, so I will write to your father to-morrow and inform him of the change we have made in our plans, and probably he will be here the following day to arrange about the settlements."

"But why do you wish to hurry it? What difference can a week make?" faltered Haidée.

"That is my own affair!" he answered, curtly.

(To be continued.)

THERE appears to exist a greater desire to live long than to live well. Measure a man's desires, he cannot live long enough; measure by his good deeds, and he has not lived long enough; measure by his evil deeds and he has lived too long.



[ADAH GAZED AT THE ADVANCING FIGURE WITH STARTLED EYES AND PARTED LIPS.]

NOVELETTE.]

A BROKEN LOVE DREAM.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST CLOUD.

"WHAT do you think, Jack?" Adah Dornton, a slight, rather tall girl of about seven or eight-and-twenty, with a mass of fair hair surmounted by a small lace cap, meant to give a matronly air to her pretty face, raised her eyes, deeply blue, to her husband's dark face as she finished reading her letter.

"I am waiting," he said, smiling across at her over the high glass of flowers.

"Guess who is coming to our garden-party?" she replied, with a roguish nod.

"My dear Adah, I was never good at guessing riddles," and Jack tried to look interested.

"Nora Alginstone, my old schoolfellow. Why, Jack, I never knew you to be so careless!"

As his wife pronounced the name of her intended guest a grey pallor overspread the dark, swarthy, though rather handsome face of John Dornton, and the delicate Sèvres cup he was holding fell to the ground shivering to a hundred fragments.

"Never mind, pet," he returned, in a husky voice, as he rose and went to the fireplace, where he leant with his back turned to his newly-wedded bride.

John Dornton and Adah Somerville had met in a little seaside town far removed from the bustle and turmoil of the London world, and after a few months' courtship they married and settled down in a suburb of London.

The garden-party Adah spoke of was their first gathering of friends since their marriage, and to her great delight her old schoolfellow, whom she had not seen for two years, had accepted her invitation.

"But, Jack, do you know that cup is one of the set that belonged to your mother?" said his wife, trying in her love for him to hide the truth—that she guessed something had upset him. If it were anything he wished her to know he would tell her; so she argued, little dreaming what passionate sorrow filled his heart—what wild passion racked that apparently quiet form.

"I must be off now," he observed, presently, taking out his watch, although there was a tiny marble clock on the mantel-piece. "It is past ten, and I am due at eleven. I shall be late."

Adah Dornton followed him out into the wide, cool hall, and stood quietly by his side. Her heart was too full for words. Never in the whole six months of their married life had she seen such a cloud on his brow; and then, to crown her misery, he passed under the portico and down the glistening grass-bordered path without having bestowed his usual morning kiss upon her fresh young cheek. But as he unfastened the low, brown wooden gate he glanced back and caught sight of the wistful blue eyes and sad, paling face.

"My little wife," he cried, coming to her side and taking the rounded form in his strong arms, "how cruel and unkind you must think me! I was actually going away without my kiss!"

The bright colour came back to the fair face, and swift, pretty smiles chased each other across the sensitive features till, as he passed round the corner of the country road, her face was radiant as the summer morn, and she went back to her household duties with the old, happy feeling in her loving young heart.

When Jack came home that evening the cloud had vanished, and his manner was, if possible, more tender than usual, and he laughed and talked, being apparently in wonderful spirits. But what was the secret that made his young face look so grave as he stood in his dressing-room that night?

The next week passed away, and nothing happened to dim the bright sunshine that illumined their home; and so the Tuesday arrived on which Nora Alginstone had promised to be with them.

"You will be back early, Jack?" said his wife, as she stood at the garden gate, the sun streaming down upon her fair head and turning the thick masses of fluffy hair to threads of gold.

"I shall be back at seven," he replied. "What time is your friend coming?"

"Five o'clock, she says. I am going to the station to meet her. Good-bye, Jack!"

He glanced back several times with a bright smile on his lips. There was no smile in those dark eyes; but this she could not see from that distance, and so she went about the garden and into the large conservatories gathering bunches of sweet-smelling flowers to adorn their luxurious home with, and singing little snatches of his favourite songs in her clear, bell-like tones.

She was at the little railway-station at a quarter to five, and the platform was crowded. Not a few turned to gaze after the slight, graceful figure clad in pale blue that set off the exquisite fairness of her complexion; but Adah was not vain, and the admiring looks of the people did not attract her attention in the least. If she thought of it at all it was to smile with pleasure that her dress was pretty; for Jack had never seen it yet, and she wished him to approve her taste.

The train was late, and Adah was beginning to feel a little impatient when the shrill whistle of the engine sounded through the tunnel, and in another moment the little station was in a state of confusion and bustle. She tried to make her way through the crowd of people, but finding this impossible she returned to the waiting-room where Nora would be sure to come in search of her.

Presently a small figure, clad in sober brown, entered the waiting-room, and seeing Adah at the further end, ran forward with a quick,

pleased exclamation, throwing up her veil as she did so and disclosing a pretty vivacious face lit by a pair of large, bright, hazel eyes, and framed in a mass of curly brown hair.

"Adah!" she cried, in a glad, fresh girlish voice, "I really thought for a moment that you were not here. Was it not horrid of me?"

"Horrid, no!" laughed Adah. "But, Nora, you have not grown a bit; I am still a head taller than you."

And so chatting and laughing in a merry, light-hearted way the two girls left the station, walking briskly home in the cool evening air.

"What a fairy flower!" exclaimed Nora, as they stopped at the garden gate. "And this is your home, Adah? You are a lucky woman!"

Nora's usually glad tones trembled slightly, and a suspicious dimness came over the clear eyes; but Adah did not notice these signs of agitation, and also replied, with a pretty blush,—

"I am happy, Nora—perfectly happy; for my husband loves me."

"What time is Mr. Dornton coming home, Adah?" asked Nora.

She had washed the travel-stains from her face and hands, and changed the brown dress for a pale silver grey, with delicate pink bows at the throat and down the front, and the two friends were seated in the drawing-room—a perfect gem in its luxurious appointments—awaiting Jack's return.

"Seven precisely. He is never late," replied the young wife, a little proudly, for she liked to show her old schoolfellow how she was loved.

"Do you know, Adah, that I once knew a——" began Nora, and then stopped short, while a rich tide of crimson stained her pretty face, receding next moment to leave it pale as death.

She had risen while her hostess was speaking; and happening to see an album on the table beside her, had carelessly opened it, the first photograph that met her gaze caused her to start, and closing the album hurriedly she sat down again.

"How silent you are, Norrie!" cried Adah, laying her white hand on her friend's lap; "it used not to be so in the old days. Do you remember Madame giving you a hundred lines because you would speak when you were told to be silent? But you were going to tell me—— Why, what is the matter?—are you ill? You are like a ghost," and Adah pulled the bell sharply.

"It is nothing, Adah. Seeing you has recalled the dear past, when—when my father and mother were with me, and——"

"Bring me the carafe of water from the next room," said Adah, as she went to the side-table and took up a decanter of wine, "Miss Alginstone is not well," and the servant who answered the ring disappeared, reappearing the next moment with the water.

"Really, Adah!" protested Nora, as she handed her a tumbler of claret and water.

"Drink it up. I will not listen to another word until it is gone," insisted Adah. "There, now you have quite a colour. Hark!" she added, with a glad, quick blush; "that is Jack's footstep," and away she flew to meet him.

Nora rose from her chair with a slight hesitation in her movements; and when, a few minutes later, Adah entered with her husband she was standing there in the centre of the long room with a look of startled expectancy in her hazel eyes, and her small hands tightly clenched.

"So this is your little friend?" said Jack, in a low restrained voice, holding out his hand to the girl, who stared at him as though he were a visitant from another world. "Welcome to our home, Miss Alginstone!"

"How dreadfully altered Norrie seems!" thought Adah, as the girl murmured some indistinct words, then relapsed into silence. "She used to be so self-possessed, and now she is worse than a school-girl."

But after a little time Nora Alginstone joined in the conversation, for Adah would keep referring to her, and she felt that her friend would think her ungracious if she sat there answering in monosyllables; and so, when dinner was announced, they were all more at their ease, though Jack, who was usually so full of spirits, was a little preoccupied.

"When is this garden festival going to take place?" asked Jack, pinching his wife's ear as they stood on the lawn in the evening hush, after dinner.

"In two days' time, you wicked boy; I have answered that question a dozen times at least," replied Adah—for she was but a girl—with a little pout.

"Excuse me, madame; my memory is very short," he replied, with mock politeness.

Adah did not make any reply, and they stood there in perfect silence, watching the twilight fade away, and the stars come out one by one in the high clear sky.

There was a pleasant hum of night insects in the air, and every now and again the sound of bright, joyous laughter, or a woman's voice ringing out soft and clear, as some boating party passed along the river, came to their ears.

"Nora, I shall keep you hard at work to-morrow," said Adah, rather abruptly, as she placed her hand on her friend's shoulder and gazed steadfastly into the sweet face which had changed so since she last saw her. "You must brighten up for the garden party," she added, and Nora gave a little laugh.

"Why, Adah, do you expect me to be as mischievous as when I was at school?" she said.

"I should not object. I do not like to see you so silent, for it is so unusual."

"You see, Adah, only invited you here on account of your wonderful flow of spirits, and she is naturally disappointed. She thought you would make her garden-party a success," observed Jack, gazing up at the sky as though absorbed in thought.

"Jack, I declare you are incorrigible. You know that I asked her because I wished to see her again, and for no other reason."

"Wife, if I may be allowed to make a suggestion," said Jack, presently glancing at Nora, who was standing by a tall rose-bush with a strange tense expression on her small features, "we had better go indoors if we are not desirous of going off into a rapid consumption."

"It has turned quite chilly," declared Adah, with a little shrug of her shapely shoulders. "Come, Nora, and give us a treat. You know what I mean."

And so, when they went into the drawing-room Nora sat down at the piano and played for them some dreamy, tender pieces that somehow impressed her hearers with the idea that her thoughts were far away—some spirited, and with a certain reckless dash that told of a strong will beneath that childlike exterior.

That night, when Nora found herself in her room alone, she did not immediately disrobe, as Adah had laughingly ordered; she went to the lace-draped casement and drew aside the curtains, and stood gazing out with sad eyes at the spacious grounds in which the house was situated.

"Why does he ignore that episode?" she murmured, and a tear slowly coursed down her pale cheeks. "Is it so easy to forget? I wish I could!" and a sigh broke from the parted lips.

The moon rose higher and higher in the deep blue heavens, and still that small, quiet form stood at the window with pale, tearful face, and now with clasped hands. The chiming of a distant clock aroused her from her painful reverie, and she turned away after drawing the curtains together.

Next morning Adah came down rather late, but she found her husband and Nora already in the cheerful cool chintz-furnished breakfast-room. Nora was standing at the window, a tiny figure in pale pink, and Jack was deep in the perusal of his newspaper, when she entered, yet she could have declared that she heard voices as she came along the wide hall.

"I thought I heard you two talking," she said, with a bright smile up into her husband's face, "and instead you are behaving like an engaged couple who have quarrelled. I am surprised at you, Jack!"

"Oh do not scold him, Adah," cried Nora, merrily, while Jack flushed and bit his lip. "I told him not to stand upon ceremony with me."

"Very well, dear, if you don't mind!" And with these words Adah sat down and commenced pouring out the coffee with quite a little matronly air.

"You will not be dull to-day, wife," said Jack as he bade her good-bye that morning, "I am glad Nora has come." These words were accompanied with an almost tender glance at Nora Alginstone's averted face, and an uncomfortable wordless feeling crept into the young wife's heart. Nora, too! How naturally he called her by her Christian name!

"I am never dull, Jack," she replied; "but I am glad, very glad, to have dear old Norrie with me." She followed him out of the room as she spoke, and standing at the open door again watched him turn the corner; and the memory of the loving light in his eyes as he bade her good-bye banished that nameless feeling from her heart.

"How he loves you!" said Nora, who had come out into the hall on hearing Jack say good-bye. She came to the door, through which such an inviting glimpse could be seen of the tall trees opposite, standing motionless in the sultry morning air, and of beautifully laid-out grounds and undulating grass-land beyond, and, in the distance, a silvery something that must be water.

"Why do you always sigh when you speak of his love for me?" asked her friend, while a thought flashed through her mind that perhaps Nora had had a false lover. Nora was not one to make a parade of her feelings, therefore she would not have heard of it if such were the case.

"Because now I have no one to care for me. I am rich, truly, but money is not everything, though there are so many who think otherwise. I would give all my wealth for——"

She broke off abruptly, in the midst of her passionate speech, for Adah was staring at her in surprise, and well she might. The slight *petite* form seemed to dilate and grow taller with the girl's emotion, and the great hazel eyes were aglow with intense feeling.

"Come, dear," said Adah gently. It was as she suspected. Poor Nora! She could appreciate the girl's agitation,—she thought, as she drew her slender hand through her arm and led the way back to the breakfast-room.

"What are we going to do first?"

It was Nora who spoke, and her tones had regained their old girlish light-heartedness.

"Don't you think we had better put on our things and order those sweetmeats at once; they will never be sent in time," replied Adah, looking a little anxious. "I cannot imagine how I could have been so stupid as to forget them."

"Oh, I daresay we can manage to carry them home," responded Nora, and Adah gave a sigh of relief.

"So we can."

Away they went upstairs, and in a very short space of time the two were walking leisurely along the road that led to the town. The sun shone brightly, and the sleepy chirp of birds and the drowsy hum of insects filled the air. It was a perfect day and Nora's pretty face had not a sign of a cloud upon it when they arrived at their destination. When they returned home there was plenty to do, and the rest of the day was spent in preparations for the morrow, the two girls laughing and chattering about the guests that were expected. Jack came home at his usual hour, and that evening passed away as the previous one, with the exception that, after dinner, instead of hav

ing any music, they went for a walk across the moonlit field.

The next day dawned, the morning of the garden-party, fair, but with a slight misty haze over the awakening earth that told of a sultry day.

"I am so glad, dear," said Nora, turning from her contemplation of the marquee that had been erected on the lawn, as Adah Dornton entered the breakfast-room, which she had left to give some directions to the cook. "We shall have a lovely day."

"Yes, am I not lucky?" she replied, with a radiant smile, coming to her friend's side and putting her arm round her small form.

"Very lucky, it is not every woman who has such a husband!" cried a saucy, manly voice, and Jack drew his wife's happy face on to his breast. Nora's back was turned, so she could not see the hasty caress.

"Pardon me, Mr. Dornton," (how quickly she always pronounced that name), "but I fancy the luck is on the other side."

"Well, I will not contradict so fair a specimen of the opposite sex," he replied, as he seated himself at the daintily spread table.

After the meal was finished Jack went to his own sanctum, a cosy apartment which was neither smoking-room, nor study, nor sitting-room, but a snug mixture of all three, leaving his wife and Nora to see to the final arrangements; and by the time the luncheon-bell sounded they were completed, and Nora and Adah were sitting with bright smiling faces in the dining-room when Jack came down.

At half-past three, Adah was standing on the lawn, tall and slender, and golden-haired, clad in pale green silk and priceless lace, and the sun shining down so brightly could find no flaw in that perfect face. Nora was beside her, looking like a little wood nymph in her deep rose-pink silk gauze and dainty ribbons. A flush was on her piquant face as she chatted vivaciously to a group of ladies and gentlemen who had just arrived.

Soon the lawn was crowded with visitors, and through the trees the gay dresses of the young girls could be seen as they wandered with their cavaliers among the flowers, while their elders seated themselves and conversed confidentially with one another as they sipped lemonade or iced sherry.

The party was a success. There could be no doubt of that; and Adah turned with a happy smile on her face to Lady Ladbroke as that lady touched her on the arm with her fringed fan.

"Who is that young lady dressed in rose gauze? That little thing with such exceedingly beautiful eyes?" she asked, indicating, with a slight inclination of her head, a spot some little distance from them where Jack and Nora were standing engaged in earnest conversation.

"That is Nora Alginstone, my old schoolfellow. She is very pretty, I think," replied Adah, looking pleased at the compliment paid to her friend.

"Ah! and she is staying with you?" murmured Lady Ladbroke, with a significant nod. "Take care, take care, my dear," continued the mischief-maker.

Something required Adah's attention at that moment, and when she again found herself at leisure Jack and Nora were nowhere to be seen. Hubert Huntley, one of her guests, came up to her just then with a smile and a bow, asking her to show him some flowers his mother had been praising, and she smilingly laid her grey-gloved hand on his arm and led the way down a by-path bordered by poplars, and between one of the gaps, as she walked with a society smile on her face, and society small-talk on her lips, she saw her husband standing beside Nora—he with a tender, anxious light in his dark eyes, she with upraised eyes and small clasped hands.

As Hubert turned to her with the remark, "They are glorious!"—they had reached the conservatory by this time, and through the open door could be seen a mass of rare exotics—she saw Jack raise Nora's hand and press it between both his own, while a crimson flush of pleasure overspread the girlish features.

"Yes, are they not lovely?" she remarked, calmly, as they entered the hot-house.

Her heart was beating madly at the scene she had just witnessed, and the scent of the many flowers made her feel quite faint.

"Lady Ladbroke's mysterious nods and glances came back to the young wife with unpleasant distinctness. How cruel, how unkind of Jack to make her the object of tea-table gossip, for of course the old mischief-lover would impose upon his flirtation with Nora!

A proud smile rested on Adah's lips as she turned with her companion and retraced her steps. She would show all there that she saw no harm in her husband making himself agreeable to their visitor; and so, when they came out of the shade of the tall, straight poplars on to the lawn which was strewn with the delicate, pale blossoms of the laburnum that fringed one side, she went up to Jack and made some smiling remark, at the same time placing her hand on his arm.

"How can she be so blind?" was Lady Ladbroke's malicious remark as she beheld this, and the person addressed pulled his long, grey moustache and muttered under his breath,—

"Sensible little woman that!"

When the sun began to decline, and the high blue sky was flecked with tiny, feathery, rose-tinted clouds, and the song of the birds had sunk into a dreamy murmur, and the many gaudily-coloured butterflies had ceased their aërial wanderings, the guests began to disperse, and as the last tinge of pink faded in the west, Adah and her husband stood alone on the rich, green lawn. Nora had gone indoors.

But Adah spoke no word of reproach; she would not condemn him for this alone; she must have other evidence that he was false ere she accused him; and so, when in the shelter of a tall, but bushy monthly rose-tree he took her in his arms and pressed a tender kiss of love on her lips, she put her white arm round his neck and returned the caress.

Then Nora came out into the garden again, and the three went down to the water's edge—the river flowed at the end of their grounds—and Jack untied the boat from the boat-house door, and they went for a row in the sweet eventide, and Nora sang in her rich, soft voice as they floated along in the calm, still twilight.

CHAPTER II.

PROOF POSITIVE.

"I SHALL not be home until eight o'clock, wife, so you had better not wait dinner," said Jack, some few days later, as he rose from the breakfast-table.

"Why, Jack? I hope you are not working too hard," she replied, with a quick look of anxiety into his face. "You look quite pale this morning!"

"Oh, I have not recovered from the garden-party yet," he laughed; but that laugh did not deceive Adah. There must be some cause for his white, tired-looking face and haggard eyes. Still she did not press the subject, for Jack was very reserved, and did not like being questioned.

When they were first married she had asked, naturally enough, a few simple questions about his family, and he had replied, almost sternly,—

"I am rich, Adah; you can have everything you desire. What more can you wish for?"

And she had never spoken on the subject again. She did not know if he had a father or mother living. But they had been very happy; until now, not a single cloud had arisen between them, and now was not the cloud of her own making? After all, was there anything so very dreadful in what she had seen? It was Lady Ladbroke's spiteful remarks that had rankled in her mind, and made her see everything through a magnifying-glass.

Nora was very silent and preoccupied all that day; and there was a strange air of repressed excitement about her, that struck her friend with a feeling of uneasiness; but the afternoon faded into evening, and the evening into night, without anything unusual occurring, so she decided that Nora was still brooding over that past love.

"Don't you think you had better go to bed early, dear?" said Jack, looking at the clock, and laying his hand caressingly on the golden head. "It is ten now, and I am going to stay up late. I must finish those papers to-night."

"You need not look so terribly in earnest over it, Jack," observed Adah; "but I think it very foolish."

"Adah!" he cried, almost fiercely; "will you not do anything I ask you?"

His wife stared at him in surprise. What did he mean?

"Surely, you are not alluding to my going to bed early," she said, slowly, as though she felt there was some mystery which she could not grasp. "How strangely you speak, Jack!"

"I know I do, pet; but you must forgive me; I have been working very hard lately, but it will be all over next week," and he heaved a deep sigh of relief, and wiped his brow, which had become quite moist.

Nora Alginstone, who had been a silent witness of this scene, started and paled, as the last words fell upon her ear; and she clasped those tiny hands of hers over her face to hide the tears in her hazel eyes, as she murmured, brokenly,—

"Yes, all over. So ends my love idyll!"

At half-past ten Adah and Nora retired, after bidding Jack good-night; but Jack Dornton's wife did not go to bed at once. Her head ached, and it was rather close indoors, so she went to the window, and opening it, knelt on the deep window-seat and gazed out at the beautiful, calm night scene.

There was a new moon shining in the clear, dark heavens, and it shed its pure light on the sombre-looking trees in the grounds below; on the many pretty-shaped flower-beds, and and the smooth water that gleamed darkly through the tall branches of the trees. She could see the gaudy bodies of the fireflies as they circled round and round above the damp, marshy banks of the river, and from under a great clump of evergreens gleamed the bright lamps of glow-worms.

Presently the sweet, shrill notes of a nightingale rang out on the still night air, startling Adah a little, for her thoughts had been far away. She was thinking of the little village where she was born, and where, when she was scarcely old enough to judge the extent of her loss, her mother died, leaving her to the care of two maiden aunts, who, though worthy dames, were terribly stiff and harsh.

"Dear Jack," she whispered, softly, as she raised her eyes, which had grown black with emotion, to the sky where the stars were twinkling merrily, "it was a hard life before I met you!"

Suddenly there came to her the sound of footsteps on the gravel path below, not stealthy as those of an intruder, but steady, firm steps; and in the pale moonlight there appeared, coming from the house, the figure of a man. He was about the same height as Jack, had the same upright carriage, and peculiar trick of putting his hand up to his face as he walked; but his back was turned, and she could not see his features.

Then again there was a slight rustle, and a tiny figure ran quickly across the lawn, and in another moment the man had turned catching the girl in his arms. One glimpse was all Adah caught of that pale countenance; but that was enough. It was Jack! There was no difficulty in recognizing the slim, little form of Nora Alginstone.

Yet stay; a doubt crept across her mind; she would not like to swear that it was her husband who met their guest in the garden at night. She would wait until they returned,

then she could obtain a good look at Nora's companion.

And so she waited on until it grew quite chilly and dark; rain-clouds gathered in the sky, completely hiding the moon and pale stars, and a misty pall crept over the earth; and then, in the grey light, she saw Nora pass swiftly up the pathway and enter the house; but she was alone. Where, then, was her companion of an hour ago?

With a shiver Adah rose and closed the window.

There was a doubt, and she would not even now condemn them; the future should decide. So she told herself as she quietly disrobed.

She heard her husband's footsteps ascend the stairs after a time, and listened as he passed to and fro the dressing-room with slow, uneven steps, and then she fell asleep.

There was a little spice of restraint in Adah's greeting next day when she met Nora on the landing, but, at the same time, she felt a thrill of pity pass through her heart at sight of the pretty pale face and almost haggard eyes of her guest.

Nora was evidently not happy in her clandestine love meetings.

"You look as if you had passed a sleepless night, Nora," she said, putting her hand under the girl's chin and raising the sweet, girlish face till the hazel eyes met the blue; but though she shrank from their scrutiny there was no guilt in their clear depths. "I must have been mistaken," thought Adah, and she stooped and kissed her friend lovingly. "Her secrets are not mine."

"Hullo, you two making love!" cried Jack, coming down the stairs with a pale, but merry face.

"Well, we had no one else to make love to," replied his wife, with a laugh. "Come along, the coffee is just made."

And so they sat down, looking a very merry little trio indeed; and the birds sang softly in the great oak tree that shadowed the breakfast-room window, and the distant lowing of cattle could be heard through the open casement.

"Could you two row up the river and meet me at the Point?" asked Jack, suddenly, as though a thought had just struck him; and Nora glanced eagerly at Adah, who smiled as she answered,—

"Yes, Jack, it would be pleasant. At what time, dear?"

"We could row up to the wood beyond the Point if we liked," he continued, as if following out a train of thought.

"But, Jack, I repeat, at what time shall we be there?"

"Oh, about four. I have finished that work, thank Heaven!"

This last was said in such a fervent tone that Adah laughed outright.

"Really, you lazy boy, you seem to positively detest work—at least, lately," she cried.

"I detest that kind of work," was the reply given, with a quick glance at Nora, who sat listening with burning cheeks and downcast eyes to their conversation.

"Oh, I hope nothing will happen to prevent our going!" she kept reiterating in her own mind, but her lips never moved.

"What does our guest say?" cried Adah, looking across at Nora. "We have quite forgotten our 'manners,' Jack!"

"That is all u——," he began, then paused abruptly, while a flush rose to his face—a deep crimson flush that did not recede for some time.

"I should like it exceedingly," said the girl, in a low, tremulous voice.

She could hardly trust herself to speak, her emotion was so great.

After breakfast the two girls went upstairs, and sat chatting till lunch was announced, and then when that had been discussed they went up again and dressed.

They loaded the locker of the boat with dainties in case of hunger, and then started.

Adah, who was skilful with the oars, rowed, and Nora steered.

The day was as fine as the preceding ones had been. The sun shone down warmly on the darkling water, and Adah pulled rather close in shore to obtain shelter from its too ardent rays beneath the weeping willows that bordered the river for miles.

They laughed and sang little snatches of song as the boat sped on, leaving a thin track of white foam behind them, and soon there came in sight a piece of high ground, almost a cliff, jutting out into the water, which here eddied and foamed as though there were some counter-current.

About half a mile beyond was the wood Jack had mentioned, its tall, dark trees clearly defined against the blue sky, and a little nearer an open space dotted here and there with trees and clumps of bushes.

They saw Jack crossing the open as they steered closer in shore, and soon he was assisting them to land.

He laughed as, when they reached the open, they produced the basket of provisions; but nevertheless he did full justice to them when they had spread the cloth.

"I am going into the wood to gather some roses," said Nora, in an excited voice, getting up hastily with a flushed face.

"Run along then, you baby,"—Adah was seven years her senior—"but don't lose yourself."

She and Jack sat conversing in low, subdued voices, as in the old days, the first of their married life, until Nora's tiny figure had disappeared in the gloom of the wood.

"Will you come for a stroll, Adah?" he then asked, rising from the ground, and shaking the bits of grass from his clothes.

"No thank you, dear; I am so tired after that long pull," she replied.

"I forgot that, little wife. It is no joke to pull a couple of sculls nearly two miles," he said, stooping and kissing the fair face ere he walked away with his cigar between his lips.

She sat there until the sun went down behind the trees, leaving the earth covered as with a grey mantle; then, feeling rather anxious about Nora, she rose and walked towards the wood. Perhaps she would meet her. She hoped so, for she felt tired out.

But she went on, and no Nora appeared, till she arrived at length beneath the shade of the trees that skirted the wood, and there she paused.

"Nora, darling!" said her husband's voice but so changed she scarcely recognized it, "I thought I should never be able to get away, but here I am at last, pet."

Adah staggered forward a few paces, and through the thick, gnarled trunks of the ancient trees, brightening the murky gloom of the darkening wood, she saw Nora's crimson-robed figure, and beside her, one arm round the little waist, Jack—yes, Jack. There was no mistake this time. It was her husband whom Nora met by stealth.

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" moaned the young wife, as she turned and walked with tottering steps back to the Point.

Not very long afterwards Jack and Nora appeared, both coming in opposite directions. Nora held in her hand a bunch of pale, wild roses, which filled the air with delicious perfume; and there was a radiant, happy smile on her face which seemed to have regained some of its old piquancy. Jack, too, was looking brighter than he had looked for some time; and the thought, "Her love has brought that look to his face," stabbed Adah more cruelly than a knife.

"Have you rested yourself, dear?" said Jack, bending over her as she reclined on a heap of shawls; "because it is getting late."

"I am ready to return home whenever you are, Jack," she replied, coldly; and he glanced quickly into the lovely face that had grown so icily cold with a look of anxiety in his dark eyes.

"Then we will start!" cried Nora, with one of her old merry laughs, at which Adah almost shuddered. How could she be happy with such deceit in her heart?

"We have had a glorious day," observed Jack, as they rowed along in the twilight. "Did you get those roses from the wood, N—Miss Alginstone?" he added.

"Yes," was the answer, very quietly spoken; but as she thought whose hand had plucked them her heart beat and throbbed so that she felt inclined to scream. She conquered the feeling, however, and began to sing in that rich, thrilling voice of hers,—

> "I heard a voice long years ago,
> A voice so soft and sweet and low,
> It whispered to my heart of love,
> And nestling there forgot to rove."

A quiet, almost unnatural stillness reigned over the earth. The voice of the birds was hushed, and a soft, grey mist was creeping slowly up the sloping grassy banks of the river from whence the faint sweet odour of wild flowers was wafted in a gentle scent-cloud. The lowing of the cattle in the fresh green fields had ceased; even the oars seemed to shoot noiselessly through the smooth, still, dark water, and Adah felt a mysterious chill creep over her. It seemed to her that the sun of her life had set, and that this was an omen of what her life would be in the future.

She did not speak even when the last note of Nora's song haddied away in a soft whisper, but sat there in the stern of the boat looking like a figure carved in stone, as motionless, as upright; and when her husband bent forward with the remark, "Will you sing, Adah?" she replied, coldly,—

"Thank you, Jack, for the compliment, but I am really tired."

He did not make any reply, but a strange expression of pain swept across his swarthy countenance as he once more bent to the oars, and neither of the little party spoke again until they reached the boat-house at the end of the grounds; then, as they walked slowly along the tree-shadowed path leading to the house, Nora broke the silence,—

"Adah," she began, nervously, "you will not think me unkind if I leave you to-morrow. I did not know until——" Then she paused with a little air of distress.

"Do not apologize, Nora, pray; you have your own convenience alone to consult," replied Adah Dornton, still in that icy voice.

"But I cannot explain to you, though if you knew all you would understand and appreciate my motives."

"I daresay!"

There was a touch of sarcasm in the cold tone now, and the blue eyes flashed.

Nora gave one deprecating glance into her friend's face, and seeing that she was deeply vexed about something refrained from speaking on the subject again.

"Dinner has been waiting half-an-hour, sir," said the servant, coming forward as they entered the house, and so they went in as they were.

"Jack, I wish to ask you a few questions on a very painful subject."

The young wife's tones were very steady, though fraught with pain, and the great dark blue eyes gazing at him were bright and dry. Nora was upstairs packing, and she had chosen this opportunity of speaking, for she felt that she could not rest without some kind of explanation from her guilty husband.

"Well, Adah, what is this terrible question?" he asked, carelessly flicking the cigar ash into a little silver tray on a side-table; but though his tone was quiet a feeling of dread stole into his heart.

"I wish to know why you and my friend, Nora Alginstone, arrange secret meetings in our grounds, and in the wood near the Point?"

Her words fell sharply and clearly on the stillness, and Jack Dornton stood there, as if struck dumb, staring at his wife, facing him in her calm, accusing purity, with horror-struck eyes. His face had grown ashen, and his pale, rigid lips moved, but no word came from them.

"Enough," she continued, and her cold voice seemed to cut the air; "your silence is

proof positive; besides, I saw you on the lawn last night, and in the wood this afternoon, when you thought I was resting."

"Oh! Adah, bear with it a little while. Oh! have faith!" cried Jack, hoarsely, and the wife's heart thrilled at the loved voice. But, no; he had broken his vow. She could never trust him again.

"Faith!" she echoed, "you are mad, Jack. Can you give me no explanation of your conduct?"

"No," he replied, dully, almost sullenly; "at least, not yet."

"Very well, Jack, then we must part."

And with these words she walked from the room, with erect head and firm footsteps, but with a feeling as of death at her heart.

"She never loved me, or her faith would be greater," muttered her husband, staring gloomily out of the window, as though endeavouring to pierce the dense gloom outside; and, upstairs, Adah knelt beside the satin-covered bed, with pale, despairing face, and white, clasped hands.

"Oh! Jack, my love! my love! that I should have lived till this day!" she moaned. After a time she rose, and laid down on the bed, falling into a deep sleep very soon from sheer exhaustion.

The hall clock was just chiming the hour of ten when she awoke; with a start, and, getting hastily off the bed, she bathed her face and hands in some cool toilet water, and, having smoothed her hair, descended to the drawing-room. As she entered the apartment, which was half in light, half in shade, giving a peculiar aspect to the room, she heard the words—

"I was so afraid Adah would ask to come with me——"

Then Nora, who was the speaker, becoming aware of Adah's presence, stopped short.

"Why have you not all the burners lighted? The room looks wretched," said Adah, quietly.

She did not appear to have noticed that they were engaged in earnest conversation. It did not matter much now, she decided. They had both proved themselves false, and cruelly deceitful. However they talked and whispered together now it could not make them worse, and so she pretended to be unconscious, and, taking up a book, appeared to be deeply absorbed in the contemplation of some views, though she was, in reality, wondering where she could go; for she had fully made up her mind to leave the home which had once seemed a perfect Paradise, but which had now become hateful to the young bride.

At twelve o'clock on the next day Nora and Adah were walking slowly up and down the railway platform, waiting for the mid-day express, but there was no smile on Adah's sweet face; only a haughty look of half-interest passed over it when her companion addressed her; and Nora's pretty, piquant features looked quite sharp and pale, and the hazel eyes, usually so bright, were dim, as though their owner had passed a sleepless night.

"I wonder why Adah is so strange in her manner to me? She cannot possibly—no, that is out of the question; no one but Jack and I *could* know."

So ran her thoughts, and even while she was trying to solve the problem the train puffed into the station. Nora kissed Adah almost wistfully as she leant out of the carriage window; but her caress met with no response, and it was with a sigh of relief that she felt the train move off.

Two days after Nora's departure, Adah went into Jack's little room to ask him some question about dinner—they never spoke excepting to ask or answer a question now. He was not there, but on his table was an envelope addressed in his bold, well-known handwriting to Miss N. Alginstone; the letter itself was open, as thought the writer had left it to dry, and Adah took in the first words in that one quick glance.

"My darling, Adah has discovered all about our secret meetings,——"

She did not read any further. That was quite enough; and even in the midst of her agony Adah remembered her honour. She turned suddenly and left the room, and went up to her own apartment. In about an hour she came down the stairs and opening the front door closed it softly after her, and walking hurriedly along the hard, dry road, soon disappeared from view. And so the afternoon faded away; the shadows lengthened on the smooth, wide lawn; the sun sank to rest, leaving faint flecks of gold on the silent bosom of the broad river; the bees ceased their busy hum; and Jack, waiting in the little sitting-room, began to wonder, with an unaccountable yearning and longing, what had detained Adah in town.

When dinner was placed on the table he sat down and made a miserable attempt at eating; but it was of no use, and pushing his plate from him he went out of the apartment up to his dressing-room. The first thing that caught his eye as he struck a light was a note pinned to the coat he usually wore in the evening; in his anxiety he had forgotten to dress for dinner, and so had not found the note until now.

Clutching it eagerly he read the few words written there, a glare of almost maniacal sorrow lighting his dark eyes.

"Jack," the note ran, "I have gone away for ever. Not to my aunt's. I have a hundred pounds of my own money left, and when that is gone I can earn more. You will be glad to be released; but it is less hard to think of your joy than to witness the struggle that is ever going on in your heart, which now is filled with love for Nora. I cannot bear *that*. Good-bye.—ADAH DORNTON."

That was all. Jack read it over and over again, then, crossing the room, he rang the bell sharply, and fell forward on the thick, soft carpet a lifeless heap; and there the servant who answered the ring some few minutes later found him.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY UNRAVELLED — AFTER THE STORM PEACE.

IVY BANK was a large house built of grey stone, standing in the midst of immense, park-like grounds, and the only habitation for two or three miles. The sun was glinting through the tall firs and dark cedars that sheltered the building on to the lace-curtained windows and broad terrace, which was ablaze with great stone vases filled with the most gorgeous of summer flowers. In one of the rooms on the ground-floor sat two people, both of the gentler sex.

The elder lady was dressed in a pale grey morning robe, trimmed with delicate mauve ribbon; on her soft, white hair was a filmy lace cap which set off the sweet, motherly countenance and clear, brown eyes.

Her companion was a young girl in the pride of a lovely youth, but there was an expression of repressed sorrow round the pretty mouth and lurking in the dusky depths of the deep blue eyes that told of a troubled life.

"She has seen trouble," decided Mrs. Thorpe; then aloud, "I am perfectly satisfied with Madame Breslau's reference; and as you are here, you might as well stay; your boxes can be sent on. That is," she added, with a kindly smile at the weary girl, "if it is perfectly agreeable to you."

The young girl's tired face lighted up at the elder lady's words, and a little flush rose to the roots of her golden hair.

"I should be pleased to stay now," she replied, in a low sad voice, "for the railway journey is a long one."

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Thorpe, ringing the bell. "I will introduce you to the children, and then you can go to your room and have some rest. Bring Miss Gertie and Master Julian here, please, Jane," she added, as the nursemaid, who was awaiting the summons, appeared.

After a few minutes the door again opened and Jane entered leading two children by the hand. The girl, who was the elder, came forward with pretty, shy grace, and held out her hand.

"You are my new governess Jane tells me," she said, in a sweet childish voice, and the girl's face flushed and her heart quickened its pulsation as the child lifted her brown eyes to her face. Those eyes reminded her of another pair, and she felt drawn towards her little pupil at once.

"And this is Julian, Miss Somerville," observed Mrs. Thorpe, smiling pleasantly.

Gertie had evidently taken a great fancy to her new governess, and the boy also, for he lifted his pretty baby face to be kissed.

"I am sure we shall get on well together, they seem such docile, loving children," replied Adah, or Miss Somerville, as she now styled herself; and then the maid, after taking the children to the nursery, showed her to her rooms. A sitting-room and a bedroom had been prepared for her use.

When the tired runaway wife found herself alone she went to the window of the sitting-room, which communicated with the bedroom, and stood lost in admiration of the pretty scene.

This window commanded a wide view of the grounds; on the left was a small lake fringed with tender, young saplings, and at the edge, bending over till their delicate green fronds almost kissed the water, grew giant ferns.

The sun was shining through the branches of the trees on to its smooth surface, and she could see the figure of a young man, as he sauntered leisurely along in the cool shade with his hands in his pockets.

Directly beneath her stretched a broad patch of grass land dotted with oaks, chestnuts, and beeches, and to the left lay a garden separated from the grounds by a high, quick-set hedge. This garden was a perfect gem; great masses of monthly roses climbed the hedge and dotted the ground, and gorgeous tiger-lilies and their pale stately sister stood erect in the morning sun.

There was a little soft breeze blowing, and the rare, sweet perfume from the garden ascended and stole gently in at the open window, bringing with it a message of hope and peace to the weary heart.

"Here, at least, I shall find peace," she sighed, and then, a feeling of faintness stealing over her, she laid down on the bed in the next room, and soon fell into a sound sleep.

The girl awoke with a start as the great dinner-bell clanged through the house echoing along the wide corridors, dying at length in a faint trembling murmur. She raised her head from the pillow and for a few seconds stared round the large, well-furnished apartment in amazement, then, remembering, she sank back again with a little sorrowful cry.

It all rose up before her, that past fortnight with miserable vividness—the flight, the long railway journey down to her old school, the week of waiting before she answered Mrs. Thorpe's advertisement, and her final journey down to Ivy Bank.

What was Jack doing? Was he sorry about her or glad, or had he thrust all thoughts of her out of his mind?

A knock at the door aroused her from her painful reverie, and in reply to her words "Come in!" Jane entered.

"If you please, Miss Somerville, Mrs. Thorpe sends her compliments, and she supposes you would prefer having your dinner in your own room to-day as you are tired," she said, with a sympathetic glance at the lovely pale face.

"How thoughtful and kind of Mrs. Thorpe! Tell her that I am exceedingly grateful for her kindness, and should greatly perfer it here, as I am really fatigued," replied Adah, a little formally, as she saw with a woman's keen instinct that Jane was inclined to gossip. She did not wish to live on bad terms with the servants, and she could not satisfy their

curiosity; better let them think her stiff and prim.

She did not go downstairs again that evening. Mrs. Thorpe came upstairs after dinner, and talked with her for a while, telling her how sad and lonely the life of her son, Gertie and Julian's father, had been since the death of his wife, and how that, now they were growing older, she hoped the children would draw his thoughts from his sorrow. Then after a few graciously kind words in regard to her duties—which, to the girl, appeared to be very slight—Mrs. Thorpe left Adah to her sad, desolate musings.

But as she stood in the school-room next morning talking to her little pupils, who clung round her slender, black-robed figure in childish affection, she did not look quite so desolate. These little creatures had won her heart, with their big, brown eyes, so like Jack's, and their pretty winning ways; and she felt that the future held for her, at least, a life of comparative ease and assured peace.

"Now, children, we must commence lessons," she said, quietly, releasing herself with a gentle hand; and they took their seats in cheerful silence.

The warm sun stole in between the boughs of the trees outside, and rested in a golden shaft on the yellow-haired woman, seated there listening with a gentle, smiling face to their innocent prattle; and the birds kept up an incessant chirp, that mingled pleasantly with their voices.

When the morning's tuition was finished she sent Gertie and Julian upstairs to have their outdoor things put on; and having thrown a little pink fleecy shawl around her own shoulders, took them into the garden for a walk before dinner, which they had in the nursery at two o'clock.

Several days passed on, and she grew to love her pupils more and more. Was there fate in this, or was it merely a strange freak of chance? She always took them out after lessons, and in looking forward to that wild, happy run they tried hard to learn quickly and well. And, thanks to Adah's care and patience, they succeeded.

One morning they were walking in the sunny garden, when Gertie startled Adah by suddenly exclaiming,—

"There he is, Julian!"

"There who is, dear?" asked Adah, with a smile; but Gertie had run quickly forward to meet a young man, who had just emerged from the shade of a clump of cedars.

"Uncle Douglas!" said Julian, and Adah turned to look at the new comer. She gave a start as he drew nearer, and she could see the dark, swarthy face, and large brown eyes of "Uncle Douglas;" then she smiled involuntarily.

"How absurd I am," she murmured; "I imagine a likeness to Jack in every man I see. I think my brain is a little turned."

Still she was very pale, and her sweet lips quivered as with pain when a moment later the young fellow—he was scarcely more than nine-and-twenty to judge by his looks—came up to them, and, bowing respectfully, said, in a rich, manly voice,—

"Miss Somerville, I presume?"

Adah responded by a very stiff bow. She did not know how Mrs. Thorpe would like this chance meeting, therefore she would err on the right side, she decided, if there were any error, in her stiffness of manner. But there was a cadence in the full, modulated tones that sent a strange undefinable thrill through her heart.

Douglas Thorpe lingered for some time with his little nephew and niece, making them run races for sticks of chocolate cream, and playing ball when they grew tired of running; then, when they neared the house, he bestowed a tender kiss on their fresh, young cheeks, and a look of pleased admiration on their new governess, and again lifting his hat walked away.

The girl's purple eyes wandered in his direction, as he slowly paced beneath the shadow of the trees that bordered the lake, and a nervous, chill, superstitious feeling crept through her as she noticed him raise his right hand over and anon to his face.

She had fancied that action peculiar to Jack, her husband (how the mere thought of that name sent the crimson to her pale cheeks!); but here was an utter stranger who had the same trick; or stay, was there some explanation here of the secret——

Adah broke off here, sharply, in her self-communings. She must, indeed, be going mad. Then she became aware that Julian was speaking.

"Is he not a dear old uncle?" he was saying. "He is very fond of me; see this ball, he gave it me, and that large rocking-horse."

"And he gave me that big doll, that cries and laughs, and the large doll's-house!" cried Gertie, proudly, determined to show Adah that she was as great a favourite with her uncle Douglas as Julian.

Thus they passed along the shady walks, where the sweet smell of beans sometimes filled the air, the children prattling away in their shrill trebles, and Adah listening with a quiet, calm expression of her lovely face that changed to a little smile of interest as she now and again answered some innocent, wondering question.

Several days more passed away, and although Adah met Douglas Thorpe often in the grounds when out alone and with the children, she had never once seen him in the house; and she began to feel a little surprised at this, for she always dined with the family at seven.

Perhaps he was of a studious turn of mind, and preferred to have his meals sent up to him. Whatever he was, whatever he did, it was certain that he never communicated with anyone in that quiet, orderly household.

One day, however, some five or six weeks after her arrival at Ivy Bank, when Adah entered the long, darkly-furnished dining-room, she saw Douglas Thorpe standing on the hearthrug conversing in low, earnest tones with the master of the house.

He turned with a grave half-look of pleased recognition on his swarthy face as she came forward, looking very lovely in her evening dress of black lace and coral ornaments set in chased gold.

Douglas and she were duly introduced then, and he gazed in surprise at her young, almost child-like face after she had been talking with him some little while.

Where had she obtained that knowledge of human failings, human frailties and passions that usually come only to the disappointed? And surely she could not have met with any disappointment. She, so young, so lovely, so winning.

"Your new governess is deucedly pretty!" he observed to his brother, as they sat over their wine after Mrs. Thorpe and Adah had retired to the drawing-room.

Mr. Thorpe was a quiet, reserved-looking man of about forty, with dark hair and eyes—all the Thorpes were dark—and a pale, wearied, preoccupied face, that seemed to tell of the thoughts of that other world that were ever with him.

"I have not taken much notice of her. She struck me as being very ladylike and quiet when I first saw her," he replied, with a far-away smile. "But, Douglas, I feel very anxious about Julian. How are we to manage it without discovery? It must be done I know, or he will die, but how?"

"Oh, that will be all right enough. It must be put off, say till twelve, when everyone will be in bed."

Mr. Thorpe gave a sigh of relief, and wiped his forehead as he rose and went to the window.

"You always contrive to settle a difficulty, Douglas," he said; "but how unfortunate that the moon is at its full," he added, as a new thought struck him.

"We must put our trust in the clerk of the weather; perhaps it will rain," replied Douglas, cheerfully. "But I say, old fellow, if I am good at solving a difficulty, you are a good hand at damping one's ardour," he added.

"I wish that Julian had died in his infancy. Poor Julian, it would have been a mercy."

"My dear brother, I scarcely think that he would agree with you in that kind wish," observed Douglas Thorpe, with a grim smile. "Shall we join the others now?"

He did not wait for an answer, but left the apartment for the drawing-room. He found Adah and Mrs. Thorpe seated on a couch talking in quiet, subdued tones, and as he gazed upon the fair face, on which the light from the crystal chandelier fell, a thrill passed through him, and the memory of a frail-looking golden-haired girl, with tender blue eyes, who had passed into that land without night, made his face look unusually grave as he crossed to her side, and asked, in a low, strained voice if she would oblige them with a song.

Adah rose with a little inclination of her head, and as she raised her eyes to Douglas Thorpe's face there flashed into his eyes a look so like Jack's that she nearly cried out.

But it was gone in a moment and he stood beside her merely a dark, rather handsome man, with large, serious brown eyes. Adah turned over the music on the delicately-carved stand and found several songs she knew, and these happening to be some of Mrs. Thorpe's favourites, she commenced to sing in her rich, clear voice.

"You have a lovely voice and your rendering is perfect, my dear child!" said the old lady, when she had finished "The Blue Alsatian Mountains," and Adah flushed. "Now, Douglas, sing something together."

So the evening passed away till the clock struck eleven; then Adah rose and asked if she might retire. Those songs had been too much for her. Jack's face looked at her from every page of music, Jack's voice breathed in every chord.

Mrs. Thorpe gave assent to her request with a pleasant, motherly smile, and bidding them all good-night she went up to her own comfortably-furnished rooms.

She went into her sitting-room to get something ere she disrobed, and seeing the moon shining in at the window, crossed over and looked out. She had been standing there for some moments when suddenly, in the fairy garden below, she saw a man's face clearly in the pale light—Jack's face, white and haggard, with a wild, despairing look in his great, brown eyes, but still Jack's face, so well known and loved in spite of all.

Throwing up the window hurriedly she leant out, but in that one brief moment the apparition had disappeared. The garden below lay quiet and peaceful, the tall flowers and young rose-bushes making queer little shadows on the broad gravel paths, but there was no living form there; not the rustle of a leaf sounded in the stilly air. The moon rode high in the vaulted heavens, casting down a clear light that rested like a benediction on the sleeping earth.

What could it mean? That white despairing face could not be the imagination of her brain. It was too real! Still she stood there for quite an hour, and the same undisturbed stillness reigned over the place; and so, with a miserable, restless feeling, she closed the windows and went back to her bedroom.

"You were up late last night, Miss Somerville," observed Mrs. Thorpe, next morning as they sat at breakfast. "I heard you close your sitting-room window," she added, in answer to Adah's look of surprised inquiry.

Douglas looked keenly at the sweet face that had grown so strangely pale at his mother's words and then he took up some letter and commenced to read.

"I could not sleep," replied Adah, briefly.

"But I think it is always best to go to bed, it rests one if one cannot sleep. You must go earlier to your room to-night."

There was an eager, anxious light in Mrs. Thorpe's eyes as she spoke, and she glanced

across the table at Douglas with a look that plainly said, "What am I to do?"

"I shall be very glad to avail myself of your offer," said Adah, and then she rose and went to the school-room, where her willing pupils were already seated.

When the morning's lessons had been gone through she took the two children out for their usual walk, and then, giving them in charge of the nurse, she went up to dress for dinner and have a little rest.

Dinner was usually a very pleasant, cheerful meal with the Thorpes, but that night there was a kind of brooding quiet in the manner of all that struck Adah unpleasantly. Mrs. Thorpe was evidently excited about something, and her two sons glanced gravely at one another across the long table with its glittering glass and gleaming silver, and rich, rare smelling flowers.

A feeling that she was an intruder stole over Adah as she noted the restraint they all put upon themselves; and when the meal—the first she had ever found tedious in that house—was finished, she bade them good-night, and, taking her candle from a side-table, she went up to her rooms.

She was very glad of the excuse to retire early, for she had determined to keep strict watch over the grounds, and solve, if possible, the mystery of the previous night.

Throwing open the window, she seated herself in a low chair, well in the shadow of the curtains, and where, if there was anyone in the garden below, they could not see her. If that were indeed Jack, then he would surely come again. And so she waited.

It was a calm, still night; there was no moon yet. The sky was clear and dark, and the stars blinked and sparkled in unrivalled brightness; but presently, from behind a broad hill that stood out a solitary spot in the darkness, across the wide river there shot a clear pale ray, and gradually the Queen of Night rose in silvery splendour, mounting higher and higher till the whole landscape, hills, wood, calm river, and grounds were blotted in its pure light.

Presently, as she sat there with faintly beating heart and white waiting face, there fell upon the almost solemn silence the stealthy tread of footsteps. Leaning slightly forward, still in the shadow of the curtains, Adah saw Jack, walking feebly, and bearing on the arm of a young girl as though for support.

She could see them both plainly, for the moon's rays fell straight on to their faces. The girl was Rose Dalton, a friend of Mrs. Thorpe's, whom she had seen several times at the house, and on a few occasions she had stayed to dinner. But what was she doing there at the dead of night walking in the garden with her husband!

How feeble he looked. Was it possible that grief for her had brought him thus low? His clothes hung loosely on his shrunken frame, and on his face, as he conversed in a subdued whisper with Rose Dalton, there rested a grey look of pain that touched the young wife's heart.

In her excitement Adah forgot the strangeness of Jack's presence at Ivy Bank, her only thought was how could she contrive to see him.

"Oh, Heaven!" she murmured, "he is ill, perhaps dying. My place is by his side; and yet I left him of my own accord."

While she breathed those few broken words she did not take her eyes off the two slowly pacing the crisp, wide gravel path, nearly beneath her window, and a swift, cold revulsion of feeling came over her as she saw him draw the girl's bright sympathetic face towards him and press a kiss on her white forehead.

After that they walked nearer the house, and the man seemed as though about to faint, for he leant against the trunk of a young poplar, and the girl bent over him in silent sympathy; then presently they turned, he looking feebler than before, and entered the house.

Every doubt was banished now. It was indeed Jack whom she had seen, but the mystery was great, ay, greater than ever. Why did he only come out at night? When had he come? Where did he live—in what part of the house? These and countless other vain questions passed like lightning through her throbbing brain; but no answer came to her in the darkness and solitude of her quiet chamber, and rising, she went into her bed-room, leaving the window open.

* * * * *

Adah awoke next morning feeling weary and tired, and with a dim sense of something unusual having happened; then she rose on her elbow and listened intently, for there was an unwonted sound in the house.

Swift, hurried, yet, soft footsteps passed to and fro, and the gentle murmuring of hushed voices came to her ear. She looked at her watch. It was a quarter to nine, the exact minute when the strict old butler always rung the breakfast-bell, but no sound broke the stillness, all was silent, for that strange murmur of voices and gentle hurrying of feet.

What could have occurred? she asked herself, as she rose and commenced to dress with nervous haste. This did not take long and opening the door of her bedroom she passed down the wide-oaken staircase on her way to the breakfast-room.

She met two or three servants, but though she noticed a quiet, subdued expression on their faces she did not question them. It would not be in good taste.

Mrs. Thorpe and her son were seated at the table when she entered. Douglas was not there. A feeling of oppression came over Adah as she took her place, and then she noticed that the blinds were down, shutting out the bright golden sunshine and the glorious view of the fresh dew-kissed earth.

Glancing across at Mrs. Thorpe she saw that the sweet motherly face was pale and tear-stained, and round the kind, brown eyes were great dark circles. Her hands trembled, too, as she poured out the coffee. She noticed Adah's glance, for she set the coffee-biggin down and said,—

"Some one whom we held very dear is dead."

Her voice quivered as she spoke, and the tears coursed rapidly down her cheeks; while Mr. Thorpe rustled his paper noisily, coughed once or twice, and then swallowed his coffee boiling hot.

"I am truly sorry, dear Mrs. Thorpe," replied Adah, softly, not knowing exactly what to say, for she felt that the sorrow that had come upon them was a deep one.

"You can take a holiday, Miss Somerville," continued the elder lady, with a sad attempt at a smile. "I have sent round to Mrs. Dalton's to ask if she will have the two children for a day or two."

Adah bowed her golden head; and the grave, true sympathy in her quiet, subdued manner touched Mrs. Thorpe, for she rose and pressed a kiss upon the girl's fresh young cheek, and then hurridly left the apartment. Soon after Adah followed.

There was a horrible fear and dread of she knew not what at the girl's heart; and the solemn silence of the great house and grave, mysterious faces of the servants did not help to quell the feeling.

She even shivered as she stood for a moment in the warm sunlight that came through her window; then she slowly drew down the blinds. She turned away, and after putting on her hat and scarf went out into the bright, sunlit garden down to the lake, where the water-lilies lay smiling in the warm, pure air; but even there, with the birds carolling gaily in the trees, the bees humming drowsily from flower to flower, the tiny fish darting underneath the broad, dark shining leaves of the water-lilies; even there that same fear of some terrible woe overhanging her wrapped itself like a pall around her, and drove all enjoyment of the sweet, perfect morning away.

It was so quiet, so peaceful out there that she continued her walk, wandering aimlessly down the avenues and walks till the hour for luncheon; and then she returned to the house.

As they took their seats at the long table Adah saw that Douglas Thorpe was not there, and a pang almost of pain crept into her heart. Surely it was not for him the house was thrown into mourning?

"Mr. Douglas is not here!" she said, in a halting voice.

"No," replied Mr. Thorpe, in a husky tone, and with a look of sorrow in his usual preoccupied eyes. But it was the silent repressed agony on old Mrs. Thorpe's face that made Adah feel as though she could bite her tongue for having spoken those thoughtless, almost heartless, words.

"He is——" commenced the elder woman, and then broke down, glancing piteously at the young face bending over her, for Adah had risen from her seat and come to her side.

"Oh, madame, dear Mrs. Thorpe!" cried Adah, putting her arms impulsively round her neck, and mingling her tears with the sorrowing woman's; "I did not know, I did not guess——"

"Guess what, my child?" asked Mrs. Thorpe, looking up in surprise, and wiping her eyes.

"That he was dead. He looked so well yesterday; but I suppose his heart was diseased," said Adah, gently, stroking the soft hair that lay in silvery waves on Mrs. Thorpe's temples.

"Douglas! heart diseased? My child, *he* is not dead!" exclaimed her companion. Mr. Thorpe had quietly left the apartment and they were alone.

"I am so glad," whispered the girl, breathing a sigh of relief. "But, then—who——?"

"Hush, dear, I cannot tell you any more," said Mrs. Thorpe, solemnly, and as she spoke she rose, pushing Adah gently from her, and rang the gong for the table to be cleared. "You will come down to dinner," she said, as she and Adah stood at the foot of the wide, crimson-carpeted staircase together.

"Yes; I should die of loneliness upstairs," replied Adah.

Dinner was over, and they were all sitting in the drawing-room, a quiet, sad trio, when the sound of wheels coming swiftly along the gravel drive startled them out of their gloomy thoughts. Then the hall-bell clanged through the house, arousing a thousand echoes, that seemed to quiver and shake in the quiet old house; then a voice asked in a rich, low, manly tone,—

"Where is my grandmother?"

As that voice fell upon Adah's ear she started to her feet, her cheeks paling, her lips quivering. That voice was surely Jack's!

"You are ill," cried Mrs. Thorpe, putting her slender fingers on the nervously clasped hands; but Adah made no reply, only stood there with those startled blue eyes and parted red lips.

Presently firm, hasty footsteps were heard coming along the great hall, and then the door opened, and a man travel-stained and haggard entered the room.

He stood for a second in the doorway staring at that tall, golden-haired vision standing in the centre of the twilit-room, then a cry rang through the air,—

"Jack!"

"Adah!"

The cry was simultaneous, and next moment the slender form was clasped close in Jack's strong arms, and the golden head rested on his breast for one brief moment; then Adah drew herself away with a sudden hardening of the perfect mouth, and an angry gleam in her blue eyes.

He had not yet explained! And how strong and well he looked in spite of those lines round his mouth! What had made him look so ill last night? But it was useless to try and think, everything seemed maddening.

Meanwhile the two elder ones stood looking on in utter amazement. What was the meaning of all this? Jack embracing the children's governess!

"Grandmother," said Jack Dornton, turning to Mrs. Thorpe, and kissing her pale, surprised face, "this is my wife!"

"Your wife!" cried mother and son in a breath. "Then, Jack, you have acted very wrongly in—" added his grandmother, reproachfully.

"My wife!" he echoed. "But, Adah, grandmother, I have come here on a sad and bitterly mournful errand. I will explain all afterwards. Now, will you take me to——"

He broke off suddenly as though speech failed him, then followed Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe out of the room, leaving Adah standing there in the perfumed dusk with whirling brain and wildly throbbing nerves.

What did all this mystery mean? Grandmother! Then she had unconsciously come into the family he had so wished her never to enter. Yet they seemed friendly.

She could not understand it, and so she sat down and waited—waited until the darkness fell upon the earth, and an awful silence reigned in that great house; and as she sat there alone straining her eyes to make out the different familiar objects in the grounds beyond, a superstitious horror crept over her, and a nameless something seemed to tell her that the mourned dead lay in one of the rooms at Ivy Bank.

Presently she heard the sound of several softly-treading feet, and she breathed a sigh of relief; then the door opened, and four figures entered. She guessed that Douglas made the fourth, but the darkness was too intense for her to see their faces.

"No light!" exclaimed Mr. Thorpe, a little sharply. "Is there anyone here?"

"Yes, Mr. Thorpe," said Adah's low, sorrowful voice. "I have been quite frightened of the dark, but I did not like to ring for lights."

She did not glance at her husband when the gas had been lit, but waited for him to speak. He did not keep her long in suspense.

"Adah!" he said, turning to her with a grave look on his face—the look rather of a wronged man than of a sinner pleading for pardon—"take me to your room, I wish to speak with you alone," and she silently led the way.

"This is my private sitting-room," observed his wife, crossing to the window from whence she had witnessed the scene in the garden the night previous.

"Now," began Jack, in a stern voice, "will you tell me why you have acted so madly, and broken your most solemn marriage vows?"

"I think, Jack," she returned, stung by his tone, "that it would have been far better had I gone where you could never have found me. Remember, I was a witness of your meetings with Nora. I saw you in the garden when you thought I was asleep. I saw you in the wood together. And can you explain this? I have seen you twice in these grounds at midnight—once with Rose Dalton, and saw the caress you bestowed upon her. I suppose it was the moonlight that made you look so pale, and what I took to be faintness was emotion. Truly, Jack, you appear to possess an exceedingly large heart!"

"Stay!" he cried, passionately, as she was about to speak again. "Adah, that man whom you have mistaken for me was my unhappy twin-brother. Why should I suffer for his sins any longer?"

"Your brother?" she faltered; "but——"

"Come with me," said he, quietly, and passing out of the room he led her down a long corridor, through the picture-gallery, where Jack's eyes looked down at her from so many dark, handsome faces framed in heavy gold frames, and so into a smaller square hall, where he paused, and, touching a spring in the wall, opened a tiny door. They passed through this and descended a few steps, and Jack again stopped in front of an ordinary oak door this time.

"He is here," he said, in a low, but stern voice.

They entered the darkened room, over which an awful chill stillness hung, and Jack approached the great mahogany bedstead and drew down the sheet, thus disclosing the calm, peaceful features of his twin-brother Julian.

The face, even in the marble majesty of death, was so like Jack's that a thrill of horror crept through Adah's heart; but a pressure from the living hand made the blood flow warmly again. There had been a terrible mistake, but it was all past now.

"How calmly he sleeps!" murmured the brother, then he turned to his wife. "I will tell you here in his dead presence what I swore should never be revealed during his lifetime:—

"Our father was of a very easy-going temperament and good tempered, and, being exceedingly rich, he had no occasion to curb our desires in the least. Poor Julian was always extravagant in his ideas and actions. Even at school I remember his pocket-money was always gone a few days after he received it, and then he would borrow mine, for I never cared about spending money.

"Well, when we left college of course we went home; and on our twenty-first birthday my father called us into the library and asked us what professions we were going to choose, for, though he had ample for both to live in ease and comfort upon, he held it best for young men to have an object in life.

"Julian replied that he wished to study for the bar, and soon after that he went up to London and took chambers in the Temple. That was the beginning of it all. He met friends there, who, hearing his father was rich, tempted him to gamble and bet; and then one miserable night—shall I ever forget it?—he came down to us as the clocks were chiming the midnight hour, looking wild and scared, and whispered the horrible truth into my father's ear.

"He had committed forgery—had signed the name of another man on a cheque for a thousand pounds to pay a bet—a debt of honour! and the officers of the law were even then on his track.

"The shock killed my father. He died three days afterwards. We hid Julian in a secret chamber—this very apartment; and when the officers came to search for him they found only the dead body of his father, for no one could have found out the yellow room, who did not know of its existence.

"When they saw me, they took me into custody, and it was a bitter humiliation to me to have to send to our friend, Sir John Heycourt, the magistrate, and request him to vouch for my truth. Of course I was released, but the secret of our disgrace had been told.

"Since then Julian has only come out at night; but when I wrote to him, under cover to grandmother, of course, and told him that Nora Alginstone, to whom he was engaged before he went to his ruin, was with us, he madly came down and hid away in the wood beyond the Point.

"The hut he slept in was the home of a gipsy who would have done anything for money. It was he, dear, who asked me to arrange that trip to the Point. It was of him Nora and I were speaking that day in the poplar walk—Julian whom she met, Julian whom you saw last night. He died five minutes after he left the garden. The doctor, Rose Dalton's father, told us that he was afraid that he would not last long. Remorse has killed him; poor Julian!

"Darling wife!" he added in conclusion, "here by his side, for whose sin I have so deeply suffered, let us renew our marriage vows."

And the grief-stricken, remorseful wife bowed her golden head on his breast, and putting her arms round his neck, asked forgiveness for her want of faith.

"But Jack," she whispered. It seemed sacrilege to speak aloud in that still, dark chamber, with that face, calm and majestic, in death before them. "It looked so strange, dear. What could I think? You should have trusted me, your wife."

"Yes, dearest, I was to blame in a measure, but Julian would not release me from my vow, and so I had to suffer for his sin."

"And, Jack, how strange that I should have come here!"

"There is one thing I have not told you, wife," he continued, not appearing to have heard her words. "This house belongs to me, but my grandmother has always lived here, and always shall. I have no real work to do; the business that has occupied my time of late was connected with Julian's sin. I have been searching among some old papers for the actual forged note which the man whom he sinned against told me I might have if I could find it; he was afraid that John Rawson, a rejected suitor of Nora's, had got hold of it in payment for something, but I found it only yesterday, and now he is dead. Poor Nora!"

A ray of rich golden sunshine struggled through a crack in the venetian blind and rested like a benediction on the pale, dead face, and it seemed to tell of the forgiveness of One who is more merciful than man to Adah's fancy as she gazed in wonder at the calm, placid features that had looked so wild and pain-worn in the moonlight on the previous night.

"I can understand a great many things now," murmured Adah, softly, putting her hand into Jack's with a sad smile.

"We will return to the others now," he said, gently replacing the sheet; and then they went softly out of the room, where lay the man who had, after all, been more sinned against than sinning, and so up to the drawing-room, back to the light and life, and Adah breathed a little sigh of relief.

"Jack has explained all to us," said Mrs. Thorpe, rising, as they entered, and pressing Adah's hand tenderly, and Mr. Thorpe held out his hand with a grave smile of welcome; Douglas was not there.

"So you are my niece," he said, "and now my children will lose the governess whom they have learned to love so dearly."

"They will have one who will fulfil her duties better, perhaps," replied Adah.

"I think not. Jack, my boy, you have a very clever wife," he returned; and then, after a little conversation, which could scarcely be other than dull, seeing that the pall of death hung over them, they retired to their separate rooms.

"Why did Nora leave us so suddenly, and why did you both look so bright and happy that day at the Point?" asked Adah, as she stood by her husband's side in the library next morning. The family had finished breakfast, and as Jack was going to write letters she had followed him there.

"She was happy, for I had discovered that the note was not in the spiteful clutches of John Rawson, but she was utterly miserable at heart, dear, for she despaired of ever finding the actual whereabouts of it; and then, too, she felt that something had come between you two who used to be such friends, and so she went back to her grand, solitary home."

"How I long to see her again—poor Norrie, and explain my mistake!" cried Adah, remorsefully.

"You will not have long to wait, then, for grandmother wrote to her yesterday, and she telegraphed back that she would be here to-day."

Adah gave a pleased smile, and then, seeing that Jack looked somewhat preoccupied, she left him to write his letters in the solitude of the darkened room.

The funeral, which took place two days after was a very quiet one. The chief mourner was a girl, who stood a small, still, black-robed figure by the open grave, while the minister read the beautiful words of the service in a rich musical voice that seemed to soothe the scarred soul and send comfort to the weary heart.

The meeting between the two friends had

been sad, but loving. The clouds of misunderstanding had been cleared away.

It had been arranged that Nora should stay at Ivy Bank for some time—"as long as they would have her," she expressed it.

But Jack wanted his little wife all to himself, and so a few days later the carriage was brought round, and several boxes were piled on the dog-cart.

Presently the great door opened, and the two happy young married lovers came out into the garden, followed by Nora. It was just at sunset; and the lake looked like a sheet of ruddy gold, and through the thick grown leaves the sky gleamed golden and blue and pale amthyst.

"Good-bye, Norrie!" cried Adah, turning back to give her friend a last fond kiss.

And then the horses turned, and Jack, glancing back, saw Nora standing there a solitary, lonely little figure, with pale, folded hands and upraised eyes, as though in silent prayer. When he looked back again she was gone, and the last faint colour of sunset with her. The house was wrapped in the twilight, as was her life.

The railway journey was a long one, and it was night—clear and starlit—when they arrived at ——.

There was a chill breeze, but the steady fire of perfect love was in their hearts; and as they once more stood upon the threshold of their old home a thrill of infinite joy crept into their souls. They went out into the garden to see the moon rise, and there we will leave them, pacing the smooth, wide lawn, the pale, tender light of a new moon gleaming through the swaying branches of the tall trees into their grave, yet happy faces, as they conversed in low, earnest tones; the burden of their conversation being the unhappy, misguided author of sweet little Nora's "Broken Love Dream."

[THE END.]

A HEART OF GOLD.

VIDA MORLEY stood quite still in the knot of black shadows which lay by the gate. She had gathered up her dress out of the seedy grass, and glanced over her shoulder at the couple who were talking in the moonlit porch. These were her betrothed lover, Gordon Reeves, and her boarder, Elinor Duval.

A little sigh fluttered over Vida's lips, as her gaze went back to the long stretch of high road, and her weary watching was resumed.

Presently Reeves said good-night to his fair companion, and tramped over the grass with a heavier tread than was usual to him. Vida moved a little aside, making room by the gate, but Gordon drew her suddenly into his arms.

"Love," he said, "I am going to put an end to this. You have no right to wear out the life that belongs to me. I want you, darling; and I will have you soon."

She shivered, and tried to draw away, but he held her close.

"I will not be put off. It was bad enough to leave you to struggle through before, but now that everything has slipped away from you, it is time that I make my authority known. Do you hear, Vida? I'm your destined lord and master, and you are bound to obey. Set the machine going on the wedding finery if you must. Get it ready inside the month, for after that there's to be no more drudgery. We'll take a little trip that will bring back your roses, and make this dreary summer of yours wind up happily yet."

"Oh, Gordon," sighed poor Vida, with almost a sob. His love made all that was bright in her life, and for the moment she was sorely tempted.

Then she summoned what firmness she could and drew herself away from his embrace.

"You know I can't leave poor Tom just yet."

A dark shade crossed Gordon's f

"I've news that I hated to tell you," he said, rather shortly, and glanced back where Miss Duval's light draperies fluttered as she sat rocking in the old porch. "Come along the road a bit. I've tried to bear with Tom for your sake, but—I had to discharge him today."

Vida's startled eyes looked up at him, but she did not utter a word.

"There's no use of your ever hoping anything better of him," went on Reeves, impatiently. "You know the secret of this last effort of his—the craziest idea yet—but the folly of falling in love with Miss Duval has not kept him straight. He is back with the old crowd, and you are not likely to see him at home to-night. Now, Vida, listen to reason. You are wearing out your life, all for no good. I have waited longer than most men would do, and it has come to this at last. If you ever mean to marry me, now is the time!"

"Oh, Gordon!" said Vida again, with a sorrowful quiver. "Dear Gordon, you know I promised mother never to desert Tom! I don't know what he would do without me."

"I don't know what under Heaven he will do with you," broke forth Reeves, excitedly, "or you with him! He has gone through with everything; the very house has been sold over your heads. What do you expect to do when Miss Duval goes away and you have to find other shelter? The miserable pittance you earn with your machine is all you have to depend upon, and you know how far that will go towards your support. If it was a less desperate case, I would still never allow the woman who is to be my wife to fritter out her youth and strength like this. You know how long I've loved you, Vida! If you care as much for me, you'll not give me up for any other!"

"Give you up!" whispered Vida, her face whitening. "Do you mean that you will not wait, Gordon?"

"Wait for Tom to drink himself to death?" asked Gordon, bitterly. "There's a certainty of it in the end, but I prefer a nearer prospect of happiness. You must take your choice between him and me, once and for all!"

Under the vexation and impatience which had led him to that speech was a fluttering anxiety that deepened under her steadfast, sorrowful gaze.

"Then," she said, as soon as she could command her voice, "I shall stay with Tom."

They returned in silence to the gate, meeting a light carriage with a single occupant just as they reached it.

"Good-evening, Miss Morley," said he. "Are you going, Gordon? I will be back this way in twenty minutes or so, and give you a seat if you care to wait. Can I do anything for you in the village, Miss Morley?" The speaker had rightly interpreted the quick, wistful glance Vida had involuntarily given him.

"If—if you see Tom, Mr. Reeves, will you please ask him to come home?"

"I'll bring him home," said Mr. Reeves, senior, after one glance at his nephew and namesake, which read the latter's lowering, downcast face. "You will wait for me, Gordon," he said in that authoritative voice which the young man never dared to gainsay.

Vida went in and Gordon lounged back to the porch and to Miss Duval. Vida could hear their gay voices as she took a light into the sitting-room, and then went back alone to her dreary watch by the gate.

A full hour passed. The moon hid her face behind a drift of clouds, the wind sighed through the trees over her head, but Vida saw and felt nothing but the blank and barren life which stretched out before her.

Then came the swift roll of wheels again, and Mr. Reeves sprung down at her side. She was thankful for the dimness which covered the shambling figure he assisted down from the sight of those other two.

"Tom," she said, clinging to his arm and trying to lead him by a path which led to the rear door. "Come in, dear; I kept your supper waiting for you."

He shook off her clasp and stood staring at her in a wild, crazed way which she knew and dreaded.

"Go in yourself," he muttered, angrily. "Who told you to send for me? I'm going back. I won't be led by a girl, I've told you before. Think I'll go in, in this plight, before her?"

Mr. Reeves took him by the arm. "Come," he said, quietly, and Tom yielded as unquestioning obedience as Gordon had done. But as they moved forward some new crotchet entered his bewildered brain. He wrenched himself free and stumbled toward the porch, muttering:

"It's Reeves, and he's playing false to Vida. To my sister! And she's luring him away just as she lured me. You're two false hearts, and you're working ruin, ruin; but, curse you, I'll kill you if you bring it on Vida."

"Come away," said Reeves, to Miss Duval, in a low voice. "This is no sight for you."

There was vexation in his tone, but she looked troubled as they withdrew together into the shadows, and Mr. Reeves put Vida aside resolutely, and led Tom in unresistingly.

"How long do you intend to leave that poor child to such a life?"

He turned half savagely upon his nephew and asked that question as they were driving nome together.

"For ever," very sullenly.

"You have been quarrelling with her? As if she had not enough to bear without that! Gordon, that little girl has a heart of gold. I would not like to think that you have left her to trifle with such a selfish, frivolous creature as that Miss Duval. If you value my good opinion, you will make up your difference with your *fiancée*. It is the more honour to her that she does not bring her burdens upon you willingly, but no true man, situated as you are, would leave her to bear them all alone."

Gordon kept a sulky silence. He was bitterly angry and resentful, but he was wholly indebted to his uncle for a junior partnership in the latter's mills to which he had been lately admitted, and he felt that advice like a command laid upon him.

He let a week go by before he acted upon it, however. Then he overtook her as if by accident one day as she was walking homeward from the village.

"Vida," he said, "are you ready to reconsider that decision of yours?"

"You would never forgive me if I were weak enough to do so, Gordon—I could never forgive myself. My first duty is to Tom—I have hopes for him, and you have not even patience. I can't ask you to wait for me, indefinitely, and I will never leave him as long as he needs my help and care."

It was Reeves's way to sulk when he was offended rather than to speak his mind; but he flung out some angry reproaches before he parted from her.

"You do not care anything for me. Well, we shall see which of us will suffer most. I have the power, and I will not be any easier on you than you have been with me."

Vida's heart ached, but it was well used to that, and the only expression it found was in a patient sigh. She had a glimpse of Miss Duval's face at the window, as she turned from watching him and entered the house; but she found her on her knees, packing a trunk, tossing in its contents with a reckless hand.

"Your brother has gone again," said Miss Duval, nervously. "He actually asked me to marry him. I ought to have known better than to have stayed so long—I don't know what I did it for—but I'm going now."

Vida said nothing, only turned pale and sat down in the nearest chair.

"It wasn't my fault," declared Miss Duval, with a tinge of defiance. "I never thought he would be so silly. You need not look like that. You have made up with your lover, and it would have come to this, anyway."

Vida shook her head.

"I have not," she said. "Don't talk of it, please," as the other gave her an eager, incredu-

long glance. "You can't go to-day. See, it is raining."

Miss Duval's desire to go seemed suddenly annulled. Vida threw a shawl over her head and went out through the rain to look down the blank stretch of road. Her own life seemed as desolate.

The day wore on, evening came, but no Tom Gordon did, to her astonishment, during a break between the showers.

He confined his attention wholly to Miss Duval, and the latter went singing up to her room when he had gone, only pausing long enough to say,—

"Mr. Reeves has promised to take me to the station to-morrow. Kind, wasn't it?"

Something more than kind to judge by the light in her eyes and the glow on her cheeks, but Vida was too heart-sick to notice either.

It seemed an interminable night to her. The wind rose to a gale that lashed the trees about the house, and drenched it with slanting sheets of rain.

Morning showed a sodden, desolate scene; but the rain had ceased, the clouds cleared rapidly away, and when Reeves drove up at ten o'clock the sun was shining brightly, turning the drops which clung to the leaves to flashing prisms. Miss Duval ran down the stairs with a love-song on her lips.

"Ah, with him, with him to wander
Through the wide world, only his."

"Good-bye, Vida! You don't know what love is, or you would be going instead of me. Run up to my room after awhile and see what I've left for you."

The girl's scarcely repressed excitement and the look she flashed at Gordon might have prepared Vida for what she found—a handful of crumpled bank-notes and a slip of paper with a few lines written upon it.

"You would not take Gordon, so I have, and thank you for the chance! I love him so much that he *shall* love me and forget you. Vida, child, I owe you much for this dear lover, and I will not feel quite so mean over taking him if you will accept the trifle I leave. Do, out of charity for

"Milly Duval."

I have said before that Vida was not a model heroine. She cried some bitter tears over that note, and swept the money into a drawer to be returned to the giver, and went back to her dismal machine work, which meant bread-and-butter now that her boarder was gone—started to go back, that is, and met Gordon's uncle at the door. He gave one look at the flushed, grieved face, and took that note out of her hand.

"Oh, the misguided boy!" he groaned. "He shall not sacrifice himself and you. Where have they gone?"

"Do not follow them," said Vida. "I had given him up; I could not marry him. Indeed, he was no longer bound to me."

"Bound by every principle of honour and truth," he declared. "Great heavens, Vida! if it had been me, do you think anything should have come between us? I would have made your burdens mine; I would have lightened your trials by sharing them with you, I would—— It is madness to say it, but I love you, Vida; I love you so much that I will bring you back the lover you prize and keep him true to you in spite of himself."

He almost crushed her hands in one convulsive clasp, and then was gone.

His dog-cart stood at the gate; in a moment he was whirling toward the village, but checked his horse at a turning of the way with a quick exclamation. A neat, white house, half-hidden by vines and shrubbery, bordered the road.

This was the vicarage, and the carriage containing Gordon and his companion stood before it. Whether they had just stopped or were just driving off Mr. Reeves could not tell. Gordon looked back, saw him, and whipped his own horse into a gallop. The other gave chase.

Neither saw the danger which lay before them until they were close upon it. A bridge spanning a creek which was swollen by the recent rain had an abutment washed away. Mr. Reeves shouted loudly as he caught sight of the shaken structure, but Gordon replied by a cry of defiance, and drove recklessly on.

There was a quiver of timbers, a shrill neigh from the frightened horse and a woman's scream, and then the bridge went down.

The pursuing man sprang out upon the bank, feeling numb with horror, and, flinging off his outer garments, plunged into the turbid stream.

But, quick as he had been, another was quicker. This was a shambling figure that had come from the village, and was about to enter the bridge as it fell. He had a sight of Miss Duval's ghastly face and of Reeves struggling to reach her, and with the cry of a madman flung himself forward, and caught some portion of her garments as the current swept him down.

* * * * *

"I sinned, but I have suffered," said Gordon. "Oh, Vida, it seems to me that I have lived in a dream for one terrible year. I know that I shall never find peace unless you forgive me and take me back. I never cared for her, and I have been punished for the sin of making her my wife, as I did since it has kept me from you for a year."

Vida's sweet, grave face was very pale.

"I forgive you, but take you back, Gordon?—never. There are those two graves between us if there were nothing more."

"Heaven knows I have felt like their murderer at times," he said, remorsefully. "But, darling, it seemed as if Heaven was merciful too in sweeping all obstacles away from between us. Don't remember the sorrow and the pain of the past against me, Vida. Let the future make amends, and give me back the love you had for me one year ago. It is not too late for that."

"Is it possible you do not know?" asked Vida. "Ah, I am thankful that it is too late, for I am your uncle's happy wife, and I love him with a greater love than I could ever have had for you." J. M. B.

FACETIÆ.

A boy says in his composition that "onions are the vegetables that make you sick when you don't eat them yourself."

"Why do you carry your purse in your hand?" asked a husband of his young wife. "Oh," was the quiet reply, "it is so light that I am afraid it might jump out of my pocket."

"Now then, witness," said the cross-examining counsel, sternly, "does the preceding witness enjoy your entire confidence?" "Great goodness, no! Why, that's my wife."

An old sharp advertised: "Book-keeping taught in one lesson. Terms, five shillings." He got a large class on the opening night, and after they were all seated and the money rushed in, he said: "The whole art of book-keeping lies in three words. Never lend them."

"Captain, we are entirely out of ammunition," said the orderly sergeant of a company to an Irish captain in one of the regiments of the army at the battle of the Waterloo. "Entirely out?" said the captain. "Yes, entirely out." "Then sase firing!" said the captain.

Little Charlie was having a wordy war with his nurse. His father sang out: "Charlie, are you going to be quiet, or shall I come with a rod?" "Never mind the rod, papa," responded the youngster; "I can set her right without your help."

"She was a four-year-old blonde, generally quiet and tractable, but mamma had provoked her. "I don't love you any more, mamma!" "Very well, dear, you needn't." "Well I don't love you." "All right, dearie; mamma will try to get along." "Well I do love you; but I don't feel as I do so just now."

In spring puts forth no blossoms, in summer there will be no beauty, and in autumn no fruit. So, if youth be trifled away without improvement, riper years will be contemptible, and old age miserable.

"Were you in the late war?" asked a veteran of a badly-demoralized citizen, who came hobbling down the street on a crutch. "I don't know how late you mean," was the sad reply. "She gave me this one last night before tea."

A little girl stopped in the midst of her play one day, clasping her hands to her neck as she felt a sharp pain there, exclaiming, "Oh! oh!" "What is it, dear?" said grandma—"a stitch in your neck?" "Why, gran'ma," she asked, with a terrified look, "are our heads sewed on?"

A rural bridegroom presented to his wife a broom, and told her that when she wore it out he would take her for the honeymoon. She immediately broke it over his head, and dusted him with the heavy part. They started for the sea-side the next day.

Poots's wife remarked to him, as they started out the other night to take supper with the Browns, that she expected Mrs. B. would have a stunning coiffure. "Well, I am sure I hope so," grumbled Poots. "I haven't had anything good to eat since the last time we were at mother's."

"Does it pay," asks a correspondent, "for a clergyman to take a three months' vacation?" Does it? Well, we should say so. There are some churches of which we wot of where we think it would pay the pastor to take about thirteen months' vacation every year, and then put off coming back to the last minute, with a hope of missing the train.

A reverend sportsman was once boasting of his infallible skill in finding a hare. "If I were a hare," said a Quaker who was present, "I would take my seat in a place where I should be sure of not being disturbed by thee from the first of January to the last day of December." "Why, where would you go?" asked the sportsman. "Into thy study!" replied the Quaker.

"I should like to be excused, your honour," said a man who had been summoned on a jury. "What for?" "I owe a man five pounds, and I want to hunt him up and pay it." "Do you mean to say you would hunt up a man to pay a bill, instead of waiting for him to hunt you up?" "Yes, your honour." "Do you belong to this town?" "Yes, sir." "You are excused. I don't want any man on the jury who will lie like that."

How the Accident came About.—A little boy, when picking the drumstick of a chicken, swallowed one of the tendons, and was very nearly choaked. The tendon was, however, extracted though with great difficulty from the little fellow's throat, when he exclaimed: "Oh, mamma, it wasn't the chickabiddy's fault: it was because cook forgot to take off its garter!"

Strangers from that Hour.—Henceforth a young woman will lead a solemn, stately life, free alike from smile or jest. A week ago she was happy in the thought of approaching marriage; now her life is dark with regret. In a thoughtless moment she permitted, and even encouraged, her younger brother to play a joke upon her lover. The young woman and her lover spent Sunday night in talking of the future, and when the young man went to mount his horse he was unmindful of his surroundings. Within two minutes, however, he discovered that his horse had been exchanged for a wild and vicious bullock. When the young man picked himself together with both hands, and crawled out of a fence-corner, he found that the young woman was laughing at him. She will not laugh at him again, because he meets her only as a stranger. Love may be trampled upon, but it will not be ridiculed.

SOCIETY.

We are sorry to hear that the Princess of Wales is suffering from deafness, which at times becomes distressing, so much so that of late her Royal Highness has had her musical and conversational enjoyments much interfered with by this increasing malady.

The Comtesse de Chambord is stated to be in a serious state of health caused, to a great extent, by her unremitting attentions by her husband's dying bed, although for some length of time she has been suffering from a species of asthma.

On the Queen of Denmark's birthday there was a grand family dinner at Fredensborg, at which all the Royal guests were present. As may be imagined, her Majesty was the recipient of numberless presents; among them were a parasol embroidered by the Princess of Wales, and a mirror-frame worked in colours by the three Princesses of Wales, grandchildren of the Queen of Denmark.

The rumour of a marriage between Mr. Herbert Gladstone and Miss Laura Tennant, daughter of the Liberal member for Peeblesshire, and sister of the Countess of Ribblesdale, is again revived, owing, doubtless, to the fact that the young lady was one of the party on board the *Pembroke Castle* during the recent cruise of the Premier.

It is not generally known that the house, 10, Downing-street, now occupied by Mr. Gladstone, and which has been for many years the official residence of a long succession of Prime Ministers, was built in the reign of George I., by Senlop Bothmer, one of the King's Ministers, for his own dwelling. It is a gloomy, ugly house, but spacious, and made comfortable, of late, out of grants of public money.

The Queen's health has so much improved of late that it leaves little to be desired. All cause of anxiety has passed away, and Her Majesty is exhibiting all her normal activity, and her spirits are consequently improving under the influence of the regular outdoor exercise which Her Majesty is now able to resume. The enforced quietude which followed the unfortunate accident at Windsor was at the bottom of the melancholy which at one time assumed such grave proportions; but now that the old drives are resumed, and the old active habits have no longer to be foregone, the Queen has so far recovered her usual excellent health and spirits that her restoration may fairly be considered complete.

A fashionable wedding well worthy of record was that of Mr. Albert J. Aitkens, eldest son of the Rev. Albert Aitkens, M.A., of Bath, with Miss Ada Louise Knight, third daughter of the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, which came off at St. Paul's Cathedral last month. The unusual event of a wedding in the metropolitan cathedral of St. Paul naturally excited much interest in the City of London, more especially when the bride was the daughter of the chief citizen and magistrate of that wealthy community. We are informed that only two marriages have taken place there since 1758. The bride's dress was ivory-white satin, with front of embossed velvet, trimmed with lace, and having a large bouquet of orange blossoms at the neck. Her veil was of Brussels lace. She wore no wreath, but carried a beautiful bouquet, the gift of the bridegroom. The bridesmaids' dresses were very pretty. The bodice and waterfall tunic were of ivory-white brocaded silk, over a skirt of lace flounces, and a bunch of red Virginian creeper was fastened on the bodice. They wore wreaths of the same bright leaves, and tulle veils. Each wore, also, a plain gold bracelet, and carried a bouquet of choice flowers, the bridegroom's gifts, the two children carrying baskets to correspond.

STATISTICS.

Telegrams.—It is authoritatively stated that in 1870, when the Post Office acquired the British telegraphic system, the daily number of local London telegrams was between 400 and 500; in 1883 the number was nearly 6,000 per day. Including provincial as well as metropolitan, the numbers have increased from 12,000 per day in 1870 to above 50,000 in the present year.

Comparative Wealth of Great Britain and the United States.—Statisticians have pronounced the United States to be not only potentially, but actually, richer than the United Kingdom. Counting the houses, furniture, manufactures, railways, shipping, bullion, lands, cattle, crops, investments and roads, it is estimated that there is a grand total in the United States of 49,770,000,000 dols. Great Britain is credited with something less than 40,000,000,000 dols., or nearly 10,000,000,000 dols. less than the United States. The wealth per inhabitant in Great Britain is estimated at 1,160 dols., and in the United States at 995 dols. With regard to the remuneration of labour, assuming the produce of labour to be 100, in Great Britain fifty-six parts go to the labourer, twenty-one to capital, and twenty-three to government. In France forty-one parts go to labour, thirty-six to capital, and twenty-three to government. In the United States seventy-two parts go to labour, twenty-three to capital, and five to government.

GEMS.

Some philosophers tell us that selfishness is at the root of our best loves and affections.

Have the courage to wear your old clothes until you can pay for your new ones.

Have the courage to prefer comfort and propriety to fashions in all things.

He keeps his road well enough who gets rid of bad company.

Most men like a spirit of self-sacrifice in their friends a great deal better than in themselves.

Every man needs a true inward manhood. All the elements that are in us are insignificant except as they stand related to that.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

Spinach, French Fashion.—Cook the spinach in the ordinary way; strain it perfectly dry; chop it up very finely. Put it into a saucepan with a good piece of butter, enough white sugar to sweeten, and a little cream or milk. Stir well on the fire until it boils.

Whipped Potatoes.—Whip boiled potatoes to creamy lightness with a fork. Beat in butter, milk, pepper, and salt; at last, the frothed white of an egg. Toss irregularly upon a dish, set in the oven two minutes to re-heat, but do not let it colour.

Cold Roast Fowls Fried.—Beat the yolks of two eggs. Cut the fowls into pieces, and dip them first in the egg, then in the crumbs. Fry the cut pieces in butter or nice lard. Grated cheese may be used to give a piquant flavour. The dish may be garnished with slices of fried potatoes.

Rice-Balls.—Boil some milk, and thicken it with some rice-flour mixed with cold water. When the milk begins to boil, stir in as much of the rice-flour mixed as above as will make the whole about as thick as a custard. When sufficiently boiled, add a small piece of butter and a little salt. Wet your custard-cups, fill them with the mixture, and, when cold, turn them out on a large dish, and serve with sugar and cream, or any sweet sauce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

There have been no less than four silver cradles given this year to the wives of mayors. It is a strange custom, and evidently encourages an increase of population.

The world is the great tempter, but at the same time it is the great monitor. It stimulates our pride by its pomp and show, its fleeting honours and prizes; it goads men to the race, and inspires them with covetousness and rapacity; but on the other hand, it is the great memento and evidence of its own vanity and of the emptiness of everything it offers to us. It is the great saddener, the great warner, the great prophet.

An artificial fowl is the latest gastronomic invention across the Atlantic. Bones of birds which have already done duty at the table are used as the framework, and a finely ground preparation of beef and other flesh chemically flavoured is then carefully moulded round them, the fraud being impossible to detect. Little by little the bird is built up. A spring chicken takes about three hours to make, and a tough old bird "for the use of boarding houses" two hours longer. The spring chickens are very popular at wedding breakfasts, for being without joints they are very easy to carve.

Success and Failure.—On the whole I am content that my husband should be one of the world's many failures, for there is no man more charming than the unsuccessful one. When he fails he consoles himself with day-dreams of what might have been, or might still be—dreams brighter by far than the prosaic reality could ever prove. If he has any good in him, his many disappointments have made him tolerant, pitiful, helpful. He stands aside, and watches with kindly eyes those who are starting in the race of life, full of the courage and confidence which once were his. He helps many a young fellow to win where he himself has lost, and his advice has all the wisdom of a dearly-bought experience, his counsels the humility of one who has known the bitterness of disappointment. On the other hand, the successful man is often cold, hard, and arrogant. "Why should other men fail when he has succeeded so well? It must be their own fault; they are wanting in energy, in talent; clearly there is something wrong about them. Do you suppose he had no difficulties to encounter, no hard work to go through!" Thus he boasts, forgetful of the watchful Providence that protected him—forgetful also of the kind and helpful hands that held the light aloft when his path was darkest, and pushed aside the stones that would have made him fall. Besides, how few men are successful in all things, and all through life! A large book, and I think a very sad one, might be written on the latter days and death of great men. Solomon's oft-quoted "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," is but one instance among a thousand; and we ourselves, if we have been at all behind the scenes of life's drama, know what a Dead Sea apple prosperity often proves, and what terrible skeletons are sometimes hidden beneath the gold and silver in rich men's cupboards. Really and truly, when I think the matter over, Envy steals away abashed, not having a leg to stand upon; and I feel nothing but the tenderest compassion for the poor, ill-used, unfortunate, successful man. I have never had the honour of knowing a royal personage—no, not even a dethroned one—but I feel certain that their smile must be full of bitterness when they hear the old saying, "as happy as a king." As to us, who are not kings nor even "princes of this world," let us also smile when we hear of other people's prosperity; not a bitter, envious smile, but one full of sympathy with our neighbour's success, and also of content with the less brilliant lot, which gives so many compensations to the world's poor, unsuccessful ones.—*Irish Monthly.*

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. B.—The 18th December, 1854, fell on Monday.

L. P. T.—The colour of the tress of hair sent is a dark brown, and of extraordinary fineness.

S. J. M.—The name Martha means "bitterness," Salomé "perfect," Susan "a lily."

W. J. R.—What is called violet Cologne is made by adding a very little of the essence of orris root to ordinary eau de Cologne.

S. M. T.—A lady may invite a gentleman to call upon her, provided he has been properly introduced and she is satisfied of his character and antecedents.

G. S.—You need not be at all discouraged, as few young ladies of your age have any serious admirers. You are rather too young to attract beaux.

W. F. R.—You should have taken no notice of the young man. Unless he proves to be entirely respectable, you had better drop the acquaintance. You write very well. Tell your parents all about it.

CARRONA.—Suicide was known to the ancient nations, and was also practised by the Greeks and Romans. It was much more common prior to the Christian era than it has since been in Christendom.

CHRIS. SHORT.—If you be patient your affair will be disentangled, and you will come out all right. Do not be too hasty. When opportunity favours, press your suit with the girl that you love best.

L. B.—You have no reason to give up hope. Show more enterprise. "Faint heart never won fair lady." We advise you to urge your suit with liberal gifts and attentions.

C. A. M.—You had better say nothing about it, as it was very foolish in you to write to him. Confine your letter-writing to your own family. You are too young yet for sentimental correspondence.

CORNY.—The best thing for you to do, if you really love the young lady, is to go and see her as soon as possible and have a frank and affectionate talk with her on the whole subject.

MARINELLI.—The manner of making bank-note paper and the composition of the ink used in printing the notes is known only to the inventor and the government officials having charge of the work.

BERTHA.—We do not think that the marriage of cousins is wrong, although in some cases hereditary traits are emphasised and strengthened by such marriages. By patience and amiability you will probably overcome your mother's objection to the marriage.

C. N. B.—We think that the young lady is the proper one to decide this matter. She evidently does not wish to trouble her old friend about the money she has given her, and she is probably in the right. A lawsuit would be a troublesome and embarrassing affair, and might prove useless.

W. S. P.—Do not confine yourself to the house to the sacrifice of your health, but endeavour to be absent only in those hours when your husband is engaged at his business. We think that he may be a trifle unreasonable; but, if so, it would be better to humour him.

R. N.—The falling away of the flesh round the nails is not a disease in itself, but is usually a symptom of general emaciation, which may proceed from either illness or old age. The treatment consists in good food, warm clothing, moderate exercise, cod-liver oil and tonics.

P. S. D.—1. The temperature at which butter can be produced by agitating the milk has been ascertained, by careful experiment, to range from fifty to eighty degrees Fahrenheit. 2. Saffron, annotto and the juice of the carrot are some of the articles used in colouring butter.

J. D. S.—Offer the lady your arm, when escorting her in places where such protection is necessary, if during the day; at night she should always take it. The mere fact of offering it is sufficient, without making any set form of speech.

LOLLIE.—To curry eggs, slice two onions and fry them in butter; add a tablespoonful of curry powder; let them stew in a pint of good broth till quite tender; mix a cup of cream and thicken with arrowroot or rice flour. Simmer a few minutes, then add six or eight hard boiled eggs, cut in slices; heat them thoroughly, but do not let them boil.

BERRY.—A decoction of the husks of the fruit of the ordinary black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) is used for dyeing, but the "Walnut Water" you want is more probably a decoction of the bark and shells of the common butternut or white walnut (*Juglans cinerea*). You could probably obtain the bark by writing to some "country dealer."

C. B.—Have an understanding with this gentleman at once, through your parents. Let your mother or your father ascertain from him his intentions. If he does not want to marry, the sooner you are rid of his company the better. He talks very foolishly, and we are inclined to entertain rather a mean opinion of him.

A. L. S.—If you are sure that you and the young lady know your own minds, and really love each other, and intend to marry as soon as you are old enough, and circumstances permit, and as your respective parents do not object, there is no reason why you should not be formally engaged, although your youth should make you both cautious about making such a serious promise, which perhaps when you grow older one or both of you may see to be a mistake. It would not be wise for you and the young lady to avoid company, or to allow your affection for each other to isolate you from general society.

G. B.—It is French. The English of it is "To-day king, to-morrow nothing. Love does much, but money does all." The meaning of the first clause, "To-day king, to-morrow nothing," is that fortune is always changing. The young man probably wished to suggest to you to be hopeful in the future, and to hint that in his own mind you were to be connected with his love and fortune.

B. S. W.—You would be justified in breaking the engagement for such a cause. Lovers should stand by each other in such matters. A man who will persistently go out of his way to be friendly with a girl who is his sweetheart's enemy is a disloyal lover, and will be almost sure to make a bad husband. The sooner you give up such a recreant fellow the better it will be for your happiness.

ALTENA.—The word hexahemeron means six days, and is used by commentators to designate the history of the six days' work of creation, as contained in the first chapter of Genesis. By "giving it up" is meant that the commentators who give it up do not interpret the days of creation as being six days of twenty-four hours each, but as vast periods or cycles of time, analogous to the geological epochs.

ALL THE WORLD TO ME.

Somehow, as I sat to-night
Dreaming in the firelight,
That old, tender, foolish phrase
Echoed back from long-lost days
With the sweet and earnest ring
Your voice gave to everything
In that vanished used-to-be—
"You are all the world to me."

Not a vestige now endures
Of that love of mine and yours.
That frail blossom of our May
Scarcely lived its little day.
And it did not wait to know
Autumn's chill or winter's snow.

Since our morning lost its grace,
I have won full many a race.
Gained the glory of a name
Roseate with the hues of fame.
Won my meed of gold and power.
But I'd give them all this hour,
Give the fame, and give the gold,
Just to hear you, as of old,
Whisper, low and tenderly,
"You are all the world to me."

Homage is not love, you know.
Just that echo, soft and low,
Seems to me more precious far
Than the whole world's praises are,
That lost strain of melody:
"You are all the world to me."

E. W.

C. B. M.—Rivals are very disagreeable in love, as in other things, and require discretion and patience. Be very careful not to display impatience and jealousy before your admirer. Let him feel that he is the one who is doing the courting, and that you are quite able to do without him if he wishes to leave you. A little spirit and independence has a wonderfully tonic effect on a wavering beau. Do not mention the name of the other young lady, or manifest any particular interest in their doings.

ALTRINCHAM.—You should begin by trying to sympathize with your pupils, and with your aunt and uncle, and those about you. You seem to be in a morbid state, occasioned by dwelling too much on your own troubles, real and imaginary. Take pleasure in doing your duty, and in being agreeable and helpful to others, and then others will take an interest in you. Do not allow yourself to pine for sympathy, but be self-reliant. Remember what Mrs. Hemans says;—

"Oh! ask not. Hope thou not too much
Of sympathy below;
Few are the hearts whence one same touch
Bids the sweet fountain flow."

ALLORA.—A red nose is usually the result of a special disease called Acne rosacea, which, although often brought on or aggravated by the use of alcohol, very often afflicts strictly temperate people. The disease requires more prolonged and energetic treatment with astringent lotions and ointments than anyone except a doctor would be willing to prescribe, and in bad cases it is sometimes necessary to sever some of the very small blood vessels of the skin with a tiny knife. The only chance of having a bad case cured is to put yourself in the hands of a regular physician who has given some attention to skin diseases.

GRAMMATICUS.—Dictionaries of language, in our sense of the term, are of modern origin. The Greeks and Romans had no idea of a book embracing all the words of their own or any foreign language, although they had what were known as glossaries (a dictionary of unusual terms), the earliest of which was the Homeric Lexicon of Apollonius, a grammarian of the time of Augustus. A real dictionary became first possible after the invention of printing 460 years ago. Previous to this discovery, and for some time after, the explanations of Latin words were given in Latin. The earliest printed vocabulary with which we are acquainted, where the words of any modern language answering to the Latin are inserted, is one known as the *Promptorius Puerorum*, published in 1499, in which English words are followed by their supposed Latin equivalents.

ALLIE B.—We are afraid that the young man is a trifler. Stop writing to him. Unless he consults your parents immediately, and has a time for your wedding appointed, you may consider the affair at an end. We think that you were too hasty in corresponding with a comparative stranger and in accepting him. Do not place yourself in such a position again; and keep your mother fully advised of your sentimental relations with young men.

LISBIE.—It may be that your husband is financially embarrassed. Endeavour to ascertain if any disaster has happened in his business. This would be no excuse for his unmanly treatment of you, but would enable you to sympathize with him and help him. Remain with your husband, but don't worry him. Let him learn to feel how much he depends upon you for his comfort and happiness.

C. M.—In its absolute weight of course the fish would weigh just as much in the water as it would weigh out of the water. That fact was settled by Dr. Franklin in Paris more than a hundred years ago. Australia has a government similar to that of Canada. The name of the president of the French Republic is François Paul Jules Grévy. His surname is pronounced Gray-vee, with equal accent on each syllable.

DELPHINE.—You would be doing a very foolish thing in promising to marry any man unless you were sure that you cared for him much more than you cared for anyone else, and felt that you could be sure of always liking him in the same way. A lady may use her judgment in regard to asking her escort to come into the house at any time. If she does not wish him to come in, she may dismiss him with a kindly expressed hope of seeing him soon again.

ALICE F.—The young lady, no doubt, cares for you, and is only trying to tease you. If you love her and circumstances are favourable propose to her at once. Remember that—

"He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To win or lose it all."

M. P. R.—Parmesan cheese is manufactured in that part of Italy which lies between Cremona and Lodi. The cows are kept in the house nearly all the year round, and fed in summer with cut grass, obtained from the rich meadow-lands in the vicinity. The finest cheese made in Switzerland is that of Gruyere, in the Canton of Fribourg. It is very rich in quality, and generally flavoured with a powdered dry herb, botanically known as "Melilotus officinale."

W. M.—The length of time the milk should stand before the cream is skimmed is regulated by the weather; during the summer, thirty-six hours, but if very hot, with much electricity in the atmosphere, twenty-four hours will suffice. In the winter, forty-eight hours, or even longer, will be required for the collection of the cream on the surface. To produce superior butter, the cream should be collected only once, and the churning should be done within forty-eight hours after this collection.

C. Y.—If your statement of the case is perfectly fair, you are not bound to keep silence for the sake of a family which has little regard for you, and you would be justified in demanding that, at least, everything injurious to you put in writing should be retracted in writing, upon pain of having the whole transaction laid bare. This is your strict right; but still you will probably never regret any forbearance you may show, and you probably over-rate the amount of injury done to your reputation. It takes a great deal to permanently lower the reputation of a good man.

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